

# Subverting the trite: L.M. Montgomery's "room of her own"<sup>1</sup>

Mary Rubio

**Résumé:** *Certaines oeuvres de L.M. Montgomery recourent à des symboles et à des procédés narratifs pour montrer quelles sont les forces qui s'exercent à la fois en faveur et contre les ambitions artistiques d'une jeune femme écrivain.*

*"Woe to the poor mortal who has not even one small room to call her own."*

L.M. Montgomery, Journal entry, May 1, 1899

*"But you may say, we asked you to speak about women and fiction – what has that got to do with a room of one's own?"*

Virginia Woolf, *A room of one's own*, 1929

Both L.M. Montgomery and Virginia Woolf, almost exact contemporaries, experienced many of the same impediments to female authorship, and each succeeded in very different ways in spite of these. Montgomery lived from 1874 to 1942, Virginia Woolf from 1882 to 1941. Despite the enormous difference in their access to culture – Montgomery was raised in a small farming community on Prince Edward Island and Woolf was raised in an extremely literate household in cultured London – there are a number of similarities between their work, lives and temperaments. Both came from intense, energetic families who were socially prominent in their individual spheres. Both left voluminous journals and letters which provide a rich background for understanding their literary production. And both have been a powerful force in the empowerment of women in the 20th century.

Montgomery and Woolf have left a record of major depressive episodes which reveal either inherently fragile nervous systems or incredibly stressed lives, depending on one's interpretative stance. Both lost their mothers at an early age – Montgomery at 21 months and Woolf at 13 years. Both were very sensitive, and as children suffered from hostility and instability in their patriarchal environment – Maud from the abusive outbursts of temper of her grandfather and nearby uncle, Virginia from sexual abuse by her brothers. Both Montgomery and Woolf exhibited labile emotions, with wide mood swings, and both sought an explanatory concept for this in their ancestry – each saw herself derived from an ascetic, Puritan lineage on one side and a volatile, passionate lineage on the other side. Both married relatively late – Montgom-

ery in 1911 at 35, Woolf in 1912 at 30; Montgomery to a man whose mental instability imprisoned her in shame and loneliness, and Woolf to a man whose assiduous control of her life, though apparently well-meaning, was a kind of custodial imprisonment. Both Montgomery and Woolf brooded on their childhood traumas and inscribed their concern with the welfare of children into their art; each wrote powerfully of the inner lives of women and children. Not only did each resent the fact that she had been denied the same education that bright young men in her family had been given, but each also resented the fact that women were given little psychological and physical space in which to grow and write. As a result, both wrote about the importance of a woman having a metaphorical "room of her own."

At the time that these women began writing, the cards were stacked against women who wanted a literary career. It was difficult for most women to compete with better-educated men in the writing of novels, and when women did write, their books were rarely taken as seriously. Creative literature shows us who we are, and what issues are important in our lives. Women were shut out of an experiential creative realm that validated their existence and challenged oppressive attitudes. What both Montgomery and Woolf recognized was that it is necessary for women writers to have equal opportunity to create fictional worlds from women's perspectives – to create, so to speak, rooms of their own. The medium (and style) through which Montgomery and Woolf spoke may have been radically different, but their message was much the same.

Cultural anthropologists and feminist historians of the last quarter century have thoroughly examined the patriarchal nature of our culture: they have exposed the way it has placed the male sex at its centre and designated the female sex as marginal and less important. Literary historians like Elaine Showalter (*A literature of their own*) have documented the fact that the intellectual climate engendered by the patriarchal system in the 19th century made women feel anxious about authorship. Because public discourse was a male domain, women who wrote sought ways to avoid censure: some prefaced their works with apologies pleading necessity to earn a respectable living; others, like the Brontës, used androgynous or male pseudonyms; and most women kept a low literary profile because they wrote in non-canonical forms. Some 19th century female authors like Jane Austen have been dismissed by male academics well into this century. "George Eliot" (Mary Ann Evans) was a rare female writer in that she managed to be taken seriously in her own time, but she did this partly by breaking out of traditional female gender roles in her own personal life. Her situation was unusual and complicated. She railed as much as male critics about "silly scribbling women" which was, at the least, sensible protection against being thought to be one of them.

A second wave of feminists has also begun to see how the previously ignored 19th century women writers who wrote *popular* fiction, as distinct from the male writers of "canonized" *serious* literature, managed to challenge the ide-

ologies that informed and shaped their culture despite the restrictions imposed by the genres within which they worked. Women produced a huge number of "popular" romances from the 18th century onward, but these were considered ephemeral literature – not worthy of notice beside the novels written by male literary greats. We are only learning now, through the studies of feminist literary theorists, that these women writers in fact did a great deal to question the validity of their male-centred culture and its patriarchal values even though they wrote in genres judged "inferior." One excellent book of the past decade is Rachel Blau DuPlessis's *Writing beyond the ending: narrative strategies of twentieth-century women writers*.<sup>2</sup> She outlines the ways that modern women writers present fictions that confront and challenge the prevailing ideologies. Her comments about the way that 20th century women writers choose and execute their literary discourses are in many cases applicable to earlier novels as well and certainly to L.M. Montgomery:

Narrative may function on a small scale the way that ideology functions in a large scale – as a 'system of representations by which we imagine the world as it is.' To compose a work is to negotiate with these questions: What stories can be told? How can plots be resolved? What is felt to be narratable by both literary and social conventions? Indeed, these are issues very acute to...feminist critics and women writers, with their sense of the untold story, the other side of a well-known tale, the elements of women's existence that has never been revealed (3).

My focus in this paper is on the way Montgomery both works within the traditional literary genre of domestic romance and yet circumvents its restrictive conventions when she critiques her society; how she decides to incorporate elements of women's experience that were not usually dealt with in fiction for women and children in her era; how she makes it safe for herself to tell tales and say things which are outside the pale of acceptable female public discourse. In the semi-autobiographical *Emily* trilogy, for instance, she focuses on how a young woman who wants to become a writer learns to negotiate with a patriarchal society which discourages female selfhood and individuality, denying her "a room of her own."<sup>3</sup> The three *Emily* books and *The blue castle* incorporate much of Montgomery's inner life, though the details are fictional. The books were all published between 1923 and 1927, and form a very important progressive sequence, with the order of publication being *Emily of New Moon* (1923), *Emily climbs* (1925), *The blue castle* (1926), and *Emily's quest* (1927).

One of the sources of the extraordinary appeal of Montgomery's books in her own time and ours lies in the fact that she was able to reinforce all the prevailing ideologies which her conventional readers expected while at the same time embedding a counter-text of rebellion for those who were clever enough to read between the lines. And in many cases, I expect, this countertext entered young minds subliminally, there to grow as the child grew until it became a discernible, compelling discourse on women's rights. For instance, a book

called *The girl within*, by the Harvard-trained psychologist Emily Hancock (Random House, 1989), deals with the question of how girls establish their identity. Emily Hancock cites Montgomery's *Emily of New Moon* as a book which had much impact on her personal life (220-226). In their "Afterwords" to the recent New Canadian Library editions of *Emily of New Moon* and *Emily climbs* Alice Munro and Jane Urquhart respectively talk about the way in which Montgomery's "Emily" provided a model of female authorship for them. Alice Munro makes further comments about the L.M. Montgomery books in interviews with Catherine Ross and with Tim Struthers. Because Munro is certainly acclaimed as one of Canada's very best writers, we take especial notice when she states that "the three Emily books...were all *very* important to me." She continues, "I think *Emily of New Moon* is by far her [Montgomery's] best book...In many ways there's great psychological truth in it, and it's also a very powerful book" (18); when asked if there are features of Montgomery's fictional world that connected Montgomery's world with rural Ontario, Munro replies: "Oh, very much so. In the family structure, I think....A connection with the sort of people she was dealing with, the old aunts and the grandmothers, the female power figures...a sense of injustice and strangeness in family life and of mystery in people that was familiar to me" (Struthers 19).

Montgomery's *Emily* books have obviously encouraged much female authorship. Another of the Canadian women who writes with such deep insight into the lives of women in small communities is Margaret Laurence who mentions her own youthful acquaintance with Montgomery's writing in her last book, *Dance on the earth: a memoir*. Margaret Atwood, the Canadian author who probably has the highest international profile, notes more than a passing familiarity with Montgomery also. In an interview in Göttenberg, Sweden, in August 1990, Atwood was asked a few questions by an audience after a radio interview. One of the first questioners began with the rather breath-taking assertion that "There are two Canadian authors, you, and the other is Lucy Maud Montgomery..." and proceeded to ask if there was a connection between her and L.M. Montgomery. Atwood replied that "we all read *Anne of Green Gables* as children" and then explained that she had read it again together with her daughter, with both of them crying over Matthew's death. She added that when she was young, "they" had been told "there was no Canadian literature" and that "that book [*Anne of Green Gables*] and other books...were not really literature, but," she added, "they *are*." She also told how it had been pointed out to her, and she hadn't thought of it consciously before, "that the alter-ego, best-friend/worst enemy/shadow-reflection/mirror-figure of Elaine in *Cat's eye* is named Cordelia which is also the name [in *Anne*]." She summed it all up by stating that "Obviously *Anne of Green Gables* is a subcutaneous archetypal memory..." A few of the other writers who have mentioned Montgomery's influence on them are Astrid Lindgren of Sweden (Cott 57-58), Rosemary Sutcliff of England and Jean Little of Canada (Little 23). Another

highly regarded Canadian writer, Carol Shields, has said, "My mother loved *Anne of Green Gables*. She couldn't wait till we were old enough to read it...I suppose that *Anne* was a model to just millions of girls who weren't ever able to act out the kind of battles that she had" (9).<sup>4</sup>

One of the battles Anne and Emily had was to be taken seriously. Being a female was a handicap in this enterprise. Not far into *Emily of New Moon* (1923), the child "Emily" is told that she is of little importance in the scale of things: this is very true, for orphaned girls at the turn of the century in North America were particularly low on the social totem pole. When Emily is told, "You ought to be thankful to get a home anywhere. Remember you're not of much importance", Montgomery's Emily replies proudly: "I am important to myself." That retort was astonishing for its era, and many a little girl must have been amazed at Emily's audacity, while tucking away the comment as an empowering idea: *girls* can be important!

It is the fact that Montgomery was able to employ "narrative strategies that express critical dissent from the dominant narrative pattern" (DuPlessis 3) which has kept her books *au courant* as society changed. Because of Montgomery's strategic position between the end of Victorianism and the growth of Modernism, her subcutaneous "counter-texts" of rebellion have given her an important role in helping young women – and young female writers – formulate a healthy sense of female self.

Since the recent opening of the canon to women writers, two major books on Montgomery's works have already been written: a recent doctoral dissertation on Montgomery by Gabriella Åhmansson is available from the University of Uppsala, Sweden, in book form as *A life and its mirrors: a feminist reading of L.M. Montgomery's fiction (Volume I: an introduction to Lucy Maud Montgomery and Anne Shirley)*.<sup>5</sup> In Canada Elizabeth Epperly's *The fragrance of sweetgrass: L.M. Montgomery's heroines and the pursuit of romance* will be available this year. The newer branches of cross-disciplinary criticism which look at all literary and textual production as a phase of wider human culture have given new impetus to the study of popular and powerful writers like Montgomery. The University of Guelph Archives holds L.M. Montgomery's "Clipping Book" into which she compiled reviews which came to her from a clipping service, starting in 1910. It shows that her books were reviewed all over the English-speaking world as soon as they appeared, and the reviews were almost always favourable.

Now that foreign academics have started writing doctoral and M.A. dissertations on Montgomery, and a flood of articles has started appearing in American journals, Canadians recognize that in Montgomery they have a truly unique figure who has embedded her imprint on generations of readers worldwide. Sometimes this imprinting is at an unconscious level. When Colleen McCullough's 1987 novel, *The ladies of Missaloughi*, was published, enraged L.M. Montgomery fans from the USA, Britain, and Australia wrote letters of

protest to McCullough's publisher and to other representatives of the L.M. Montgomery Estate saying that it bore too many similarities for their taste to Montgomery's *The blue castle*. One Canadian newspaper, the *Kingston Whig-Standard*,<sup>6</sup> did a feature article on the similarity, and immediately the media in Britain, Australia, and the United States fell upon the story, turning it into a minor international incident. After a long silence, out of reach of reporters on an island, McCullough stated tersely through her publisher that she had read *The blue castle* "as a child and loved it," as she had loved all of L.M. Montgomery's books.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, Montgomery's world-wide impact has been both cultural and economic, and some preliminary studies have already been done to assess her influence. A substantial, thoroughly researched dissertation by Krystyna Sobkowska entitled "The reception of the *Anne of Green Gables* series by Lucy Maud Montgomery in Poland" was completed at the University of Lodz, Poland, in 1982/3. Unfortunately, attempts to research the Montgomery publishing history in North America have been hampered by the destruction of many of the McClelland & Stewart publishing records, as well as those of the L. C. Page Company, which was acquired by Farrar, Straus, and Giroux in the 1950s. Another approach to establishing an author's reach is by citing references to her work by readers and other writers who have been influenced by her. A further dimension of Montgomery's influence is seen in the way that she has affected tourism and inspired "spinoff" industries. For instance, *CCL* issue #34 (1984) looks at the way the Japanese have made an industry out of "Anne." In 1991 15,000 Japanese tourists came to Prince Edward Island to see the landscape Montgomery made famous (Reddin). Tourism, thanks to Montgomery's books, has become one of the Island's biggest industries, with over 750,000 people visiting tiny PEI in 1991 (Reddin). This infusion of tourists started in 1909, the year after *Anne's* publication. Last year Japan developed part of a Japanese island into a multi-million dollar themepark, part of which is devoted to Montgomery, with reconstructions of Cavendish in it.<sup>8</sup>

Not too long after Elizabeth Waterston and I published the first volume of *The selected journals of L.M. Montgomery*, we began to realize how geographically diverse was the interest in her. Calls and letters asking when the next volume would be ready came from all over: the United States, England, Australia, Scotland, Germany, Sweden and other places. Several Montgomery fans urged us to hurry because they were too old to last much longer and couldn't, as one caller put it, bear to die without reading the rest of the journals. One fan's husband wrote that his wife had cancer, and he begged us to let them know what happened since his wife might not survive to read about the subsequent unfolding of Montgomery's life. Many spoke of the joy they had in finding "another book" by Montgomery after a lifetime of rereading her other published books and thinking there were no more. In 1984, Dr. Waterston and I, along with Mrs. Ruth Macdonald, the widow of Montgomery's son Stuart,

travelled to Poland to see theatrical productions of Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* and *The blue castle* in Warsaw and Cracow, and we were astonished at the deep attachment people had to her books in that country. Clearly L.M. Montgomery was far more than Canadians had taken her to be, a mere author of successful "children's" books: she was a writer of international influence who had changed lives and affected the ways that people thought. Despite the array of forces discouraging female authorship in her era, she had in fact created a small room of her own in the great house of fiction. In that room, she had been holding forth for nearly 100 years, drawing in a steady stream of readers from around the globe, and they had kept her writings alive.

L.M. Montgomery can make some unique claims to fame. Most of the writers from earlier eras who are still in print are so by virtue of their books having become "canonized" texts that are assigned to college and university students, a process which creates an academic "life-support" system. Otherwise, both popular and serious writers of any era tend to fade away: popular writers because public tastes and concerns change and "serious" writers because their audience, small to begin with, wanes. Montgomery's first claim is that she is one of the few writers who has left a large corpus of work – 22 works of fiction in her case – which have survived for nearly a century *without* being in that "canonized" group of texts with artificially inflated sales.<sup>9</sup> Montgomery's loyal readers, which include librarians and elementary school teachers, have kept her books in print; some, like *Anne of Green Gables*, have consistently maintained enormous sales.

Secondly, she is one of the few writers who retain their readers throughout a full life cycle: when her young readers grow up, many keep re-reading her books, often finding new levels of meaning at different stages of their lives. We have met or heard from scores of readers past retirement age who tell us that they reread their favourite Montgomery books every year.

Third, Montgomery is a writer who has had a strangely diverse appeal to thousands of people from widely different cultures, nationalities, and geographical locations. Her books are so rich that they have provided whatever a cultural subgroup of readers needed: for women writers all over the world they have pointed the way to female authorship; for ordinary people, especially women, in countries as widely divergent as the United States and Japan, they have provided personal empowerment; and for nations like Poland they have furnished a subversive political agenda. It is very difficult to think of any other single writer – male or female – who can make all of these three claims. It is to our shame that we have only begun to document the extent of her influence nearly half a century after her death.

The next question to ask is, "what gives her books such far-ranging and powerful appeal?" I attempt only a preliminary and partial outlining of the techniques which Montgomery uses to subvert the triteness of genre in which she works so that her books confront issues of wide cultural significance. Work-

ing in a very restrictive genre, the domestic romance, she presented a surface reinforcement of all the prevailing ideologies which her early 20th century audience demanded: beliefs, for instance, that women's place was in the home and that they should confine their activities to the domestic sphere; that they should be subservient to men; that female heroines should be sexless, refined "ladies" of spiritual purity who conformed to society's expectations; that any "bad" girls should be punished with bad fortune or death; that the ideal closure for a "good" young girl's story must be marriage. Montgomery's society and readership were patriarchal, whether we look at the largely Presbyterian Prince Edward Island about which she wrote or at the multi-denominational world-wide readership which devoured her novels.

Yet though Montgomery has been long dismissed by those who set the literary canons as someone who wrote only sentimental, escapist, rosy-coloured fictions, scholars of the last decade have been uncovering ways in which other writers like her offer elements of protest and resistance within highly 'orthodox' plots. In *Anne's house of dreams* (1917), for instance, Montgomery works up the frame story of Anne and Gilbert's idealized love, confirming all the expectations about marriage her conventional readers held, but she subverts this narrative frame with a nightmare version of marriage. The real story within the frame story is the horrifying tale of Leslie Moore (note: initials "LM"), a mysterious, refined, intelligent, and passionate woman yoked by marriage to a crazy man – a "big, handsome fellow with a little, ugly soul" who had been abusive, alcoholic and destructive until an accident mercifully rendered him mindless through amnesia. Children read the story on one level; adult women may read it on another. Montgomery knows how to reach both audiences. And she knows whereof she writes: she herself presents the illusion to the public that she has a marriage as idyllic as Anne and Gilbert's is in *Anne's house of dreams*, but the truth is that as she writes she is beginning to experience the horror of being locked into a marriage that is far worse than dead. Montgomery knew a lot about passionate and intelligent women being married to men who were not their equals; her own husband, albeit a kindly man, shared nothing of her intellectual life and slipped by degrees into a frightening mental illness. Of her own situation she writes in her private journals, "A man who is physically ill is still the same man: but a man in Ewan's case is *not*....An altogether different personality is there – and a personality which is repulsive and abhorrent to me. And to this personality I must be a wife. It is horrible – it is indecent...I feel degraded and unclean" (Nov. 1, 1921). Yet, as an author she incorporates an alternate story of an unsatisfactory marriage in such a way that its subversive and disturbing quality is not terribly apparent, at least to adults who would otherwise censor the book and keep it from children.

This is achieved several ways: the marriage of Leslie Moore is not presented as a marriage that could actually happen to anyone. The circumstances that

surround her "husband's" loss of his mental faculties were simply too unusual: it's in the realm of the 'fabulous,' rather like a fairy story. Montgomery's use of the oral narrative style of storytelling distances material which is not "proper" discourse for a domestic novel for women and children. Montgomery very successfully blends realistic material and serious subjects into the materials of entertaining, gossipy oral narrative.

Although Montgomery's books almost always end on a happy note, her characters often suffer great emotional distress. The cruelty they encounter is real: her narratives contain a virtual compendium of the forms of psychological abuse which real women and children have been subjected to. But Montgomery is clever, and like her revered Emily Dickinson, she tells things "slant." Nor does she consciously write to the same audience as Virginia Woolf does. Yet many of their themes are similar. Louise DeSalvo's *Virginia Woolf: the impact of childhood sexual abuse on her life and work* argues that Woolf has so many closely drawn adolescents because she was concerned with children's welfare. Woolf's childhood, like Montgomery's, had lacked stability and safeness, but for different reasons. Montgomery suffered, for instance, because of the unpredictable, irritable, and occasionally explosive nature of her grandfather, a primary care-giver who made her own personal world unstable and unsafe.

Woolf writes out of a cultured, literary tradition for a sophisticated audience. Montgomery writes out of the vernacular, oral tradition transplanted from Scotland into the red, verdant soil of isolated Prince Edward Island life and she writes for an all-encompassing popular audience. She surely describes herself perfectly when she writes of her alter ego, "Emily of New Moon" in *Emily's quest*: "She belonged by right divine to the Ancient and Noble Order of Story-tellers. Born thousands of years earlier she would have sat in the circle around the fires of the tribe and enchanted her listeners. Born in the foremost files of time she must reach her audience through many artificial mediums" (2).

Montgomery's artificial medium is chiefly the domestic romance. It serves her well, so long as she does not aim to write in an innovative form to impress the male canon-setters. *The blue castle* (1926), for instance, is a tidy little romance about an aging spinster (of 29) who finds a perfect mate after many trials and tribulations. The age of 29 appears to have been crucial. For instance, Virginia Woolf wrote in her own journal of June 8, 1911, "To be 29 and unmarried - to be a failure - childless - insane too, no writer" (Bishop 22). The Montgomery novel winds up with the expected conventional ending of marriage. But Montgomery manages to circumvent the restrictions of the genre and to show, before her ending, how badly society treated women who were unable to "get a man." Montgomery's own rage rises perilously close to the surface, but she camouflages it with humour. Furthermore, she presents a subversive model of womanhood: her heroine Valancy rebels against the clan

which uses her so badly. Her rebellion, which would have been untenable in reality for a respectable woman living in the real PEI community of Montgomery's youth, would have been punished with death in a conventional domestic novel of her era; instead, Montgomery rewards her heroine with marriage to a man who is both a millionaire and a sensitive creative writer. On a small domestic stage humanity's greatest struggle is enacted: that of the powerless against the powerful. Linda K. Christian-Smith states in *Becoming a woman through romance* that contemporary popular fiction and romances also often express ways for females to resist "patterns of domination" (9). The struggle in romance like Montgomery's is seen most often when women offer resistance to patriarchy or when children defy adult behaviour which damages them. Montgomery makes subjects that are still taboo today (like child abuse) acceptable through the use of humour and the oral tradition, both of which distance the otherwise unacceptable material.

Thus, when Montgomery dramatizes the struggle between those who control and those who are controlled, she usually depicts those who suffer as children or young women. Those who control are invariably adults, but they are not exclusively males. Instead, they are sometimes forceful females who have assumed or have been granted a position of power in the patriarchal social structure. The patriarchal society in which Montgomery grew up provided her with wonderful material for fiction. And the beautiful landscape of Prince Edward Island creates a strikingly ironic background: her depiction of the flawed human world becomes more dramatic when juxtaposed against the idyllic natural world. Likewise, her use of irony and sarcasm in dialogue fairly sparkles because of its contrast with the purple prose she employs to describe the settled beauty of the nature she loves.

"Authority" is manifested in various guises in a patriarchal culture, but it operates to keep women in the place tradition demands they occupy. Montgomery finds her own ways of criticizing a social system which puts women down. She says what is socially acceptable about male-female relationships, but she embeds a counter-message of numerous underlying dissonances. The disruptive and subversive elements serve to energize her texts; these elements also prevent her novels from portraying only the sentimental view of life that so many other contemporary domestic romances did. Nothing enraged Montgomery more than being called "sentimental," a term frequently used to dismiss women's writing, sometimes justifiably, of course. She defended herself against this charge. In her diary entry of January 27, 1922, she makes a clear distinction between "sentimentality" and "sentiment":

Today I had a nice letter from Sir Ernest Hodder Williams (of Hodder and Stoughton) and some English reviews of *Rilla*. All were kind but one which sneered at my 'sentiment.' The attitude of some English critics towards anything that savors of sentiment amuses me. It is to them as the proverbial red rag to a bull. They are very silly. Can't they see that civilization is founded on and held together by sentiment. Passion is tran-

sient and quite as often destructive as not. Sentiment remains and binds. Perhaps what they really mean is 'sentimentality,' which is an abominable thing. But my books are not sentimental. I have always tried in them to register normal and ordinary emotions – not merely passionate or unique episodes.

Because her critics confused the materials she processed within her novels with the literary form (romance) she processed it into, they confused the "sentiment" in her novels with the "sentimentality" of the form. Montgomery's work has either been ignored or denigrated by male critics who dismissed it as sentimental,<sup>10</sup> confusing her medium with her message, if they in fact read her books which most of them probably did not.<sup>11</sup> Female academics have until recently been too intimidated to give scholarly attention to Montgomery, for work on a female writer deemed unimportant would be dismissed at annual Promotion and Tenure time.<sup>12</sup> The fact that gifted women writers with the unquestioned international stature of an Alice Munro have spoken with respect for Montgomery's works has helped make it safe for others to admit a serious interest in her works.

Montgomery may have suffered from lack of academic attention, but her readers were a loyal bunch, mothers passing along their love of her to their daughters. And as soon as feminist criticism made it respectable to look at writers like her, Montgomery has quickly become seen as an influential writer. She has validated female experience, given voice to female emotion, and helped remove women from imprisonment within silence and pain. Her techniques for circumventing the sentimentality which is inherent in formulaic prescriptions of domestic romance are many, varied, and obviously effective.

**First**, by working within a genre marketed primarily for a general audience consisting mostly of women and older children, Montgomery kept a low profile with her subversive comments, most of which are about patriarchal society. Various feminist historians, like Rachel DuPlessis and Sidonie Smith, have noted that most women of the 19th and early 20th century wrote in the "safe" genres of autobiography or romance; they also wrote for juveniles.<sup>13</sup> It was an enforced choice for various economic and social reasons, but, given that fact, these types of writing were outside the literary preserve of serious male writing, and hence did not come under the scrutiny of highbrow critics: women's writing was simply considered beneath serious notice. When Montgomery has Emily state in *Emily's quest* that "I have made up my mind that I will never marry. I shall be *wedded to my art*," Emily is making a second revolutionary statement for a girl of her era (after the one asserting that she was important to herself, if to no one else). Male authors had the right to consider themselves professionals who were producing "art," but 19th and early 20th women who wrote generally had to pretend that they wrote as an avocation or hobby, to get necessary income, or to educate the young. If they did take themselves seriously, they did not dare assert this publicly. George Eliot was an exception,

but her situation was very unusual and complicated.

We can see Montgomery still operating under these strictures in 1917, when, already a world-famous author due to *Anne of Green Gables* (1908) and six more books, she began a series of biographical sketches on herself: "When the Editor of *Everywoman's world* asked me to write 'The story of my career,' I smiled with a touch of incredulous amusement. My career? *Had I a career?* Was not a career something splendid...?" (*The alpine path* 5). She explains that she's so in the habit of obliging editors that she will write the requested piece. A male author of equal fame would have felt no need to begin his sketch in such a self-effacing way – he would have considered his writing a profession and his success proof of its excellence. But women authors were not expected to take themselves too seriously, or to toot their own horns too loudly.

However, Montgomery probably did take herself more seriously as the result of this assignment, for shortly afterwards, on August 24, 1920, she wrote, "I want to create a new heroine now – she is already in embryo in my mind." Her trilogy about "Emily," the little girl who aspired to be a writer, was published between 1924 and 1927. In the *Emily* books, Montgomery details all the impediments to a woman's authorship: "interruption, blockage, censorship, derision, self-hatred, and...repression," factors which DuPlessis says have plagued 20th century female authors (103). Most women authors, 19th or early 20th century, have experienced these, but often without being consciously aware of the problems as being endemic to all other women writers. Thus, the *Emily* novels must have been eye-opening books for many struggling and would-be female authors.<sup>14</sup>

Two years after the last *Emily* book, Virginia Woolf wrote her famous *A room of one's own* (1929) to explain how hard it was for a woman to become an author. Montgomery's books were marketed in Britain, of course, where they were widely reviewed and read by people from all walks of life. Even the Prime Minister of England, Stanley Baldwin, read them. In 1927, the year of the publication of Montgomery's third *Emily* book, for instance, Prime Minister Baldwin wrote to Montgomery: "Dear Mrs. Macdonald: – I do not know whether I shall be so fortunate during a hurried visit to Canada but it would give me keen pleasure to have an opportunity of shaking your hand and thanking you for the pleasure your books have given me..." (Montgomery journal entry, July 14, 1927). It is intriguing to wonder if Virginia Woolf might also have picked up Montgomery's *Emily* trilogy and mused over the fictional representation of all the obstacles to female authorship which Montgomery lays out so clearly. Bishop's *A Virginia Woolf chronology* lists many books which Woolf read, and Montgomery's books are not among these. Montgomery had a high profile in Britain, however, and was reviewed quite favourably by major British papers like the *London Times*, *Punch*, the *TLS*. It is, of course, certain that Woolf did read many books that she did not record, just as Montgomery herself did.<sup>15</sup>

In 1923 Montgomery was the first Canadian woman to be made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in Great Britain. Her increasing visibility in the U.K. is shown by Prime Minister Baldwin's attention in summer 1927. It is possible that in June 1927, when Woolf went on a binge reading "trash," Montgomery's books may have been among these books, for Montgomery was considered a popular writer, not a writer of highbrow literature. In October 1928 Woolf gave the lectures at Girton which became, in 1929, *A room of one's own*. We also do not know if Montgomery ever read Woolf. I think it unlikely for in 1929 Montgomery's life was very hectic, and she was more often rereading old favourites for comfort instead of books on the "cutting edge" of literary Modernism. Whether they read each other's books or not, Montgomery's *Emily* books have been read by young writers all over the world, and Woolf's *A room of one's own* by older writers, particularly women, and critics. Both have been immensely influential.

For instance, Lady Wilson, wife of Harold Wilson, Prime Minister of England, wrote a Preface for the *Emily* books in which she gave an eloquent account of her own affection for them: when she was 11 she had been ill for a year and one of her father's parishioners had given her a copy of *Emily of New Moon*. She had read and reread it until she knew parts of it by heart. Then, later, when she recovered and went away to school, she "reread the book and realised that it must be set in Canada, and it was with a shock of delight that, looking at the map, I found Prince Edward Island. I decided to write to L.M. Montgomery, telling her of my liking for the book, of my own aspirations to write, and also to explain that I could 'see wallpaper small in the air!'" She received a long letter, circa 1931-2, which said: "I'm glad you like 'Emily,' because she is my own favourite. She is purely a creature of my imagination but a good deal of my own inner life in childhood and girlhood went into her." She also mentioned that many people were under the impression, wrongly, that her "books are only for children." Lady Wilson finishes her Preface by adding that she is glad to have read *Emily*, for "Although I first read the book as a child I should not describe it as primarily a children's book, and certainly the two sequels are for adults. L.M. Montgomery meant the book to be read – as it is – by people of all ages, but possibly one cannot appreciate the character delineation until one is adult." Then she concludes, "I sat down one day to write this preface: two hours later I was still reading the book, not a word written. Not many books of our earlier years could be re-read with such pleasure."

Both Montgomery and Woolf read many of the same books when they were young: both were obviously much influenced by a common text: *Jane Eyre*. As Showalter notes, Brontë empowered later women writers to engage in "self-exploration" and create a "separatist literature of inner space."<sup>16</sup>

Psychologically rather than socially focused, this literature sought refuge from the harsh realities and vicious practices of the male world. Its favourite symbol, the enclosed and secret room, had been a potent image in women's novels since *Jane Eyre*... In children's

books, such as Mrs. Molesworth's *The tapestry room* (1879) and Dinah Craik's *The little lame prince* (1886), women writers had explored and extended these fantasies of enclosure. After 1900, in dozens of novels from Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The secret garden* (1911) to May Sinclair's *The tree of Heaven* (1917), the secret room, the attic hideaway, the suffragette cell came to stand for a separate world, a flight from men and from adult sexuality. (33)

Undeniably, Montgomery was an architect of "safe spaces": for Stanley Baldwin, living in a country which had just undergone the Great War, she probably created an idyllic haven in Green Gables' domesticity and the Avonlea setting. For women she created a space in which they could be domestic and yet discuss the inadequacy of that world, looking for "bends around the road" where there might be escape and empowerment. Women were locked into domesticity, and both Montgomery and Woolf explore ways in which it confined females. Women's rights were a growing concern to women everywhere. Female achievement in the Great War had given impetus to their empowerment, but much still lay ahead. For example, it was not until 1929, the year of Woolf's *A room of one's own*, that the British Privy Council reversed the famous 1928 "Persons Case" decision of the Supreme Court of Canada – which had declared that women were not "persons" and were therefore not entitled to hold public office as Canadian senators.

In using the traditional domestic romance, Montgomery herself found a safe space in which to write. She could give sharp critical digs to a social system prejudiced against women. The very use of the domestic romance leads her audience to expect her to confirm all its conventions, and when she does this – at least on the surface – no warning lights flash that she may be planning subversive forays enroute: expressing her own frustration with the way the males (her maternal grandfather and her mother's brothers) had treated her personally, she speaks out the only way she could – in fiction. In the *Emily* trilogy, for instance, much is made of the fact that Emily cannot have a "room of her own," her dead mother's empty room, a space of freedom and self-hood. Montgomery tells stories about women and children, and uses hackneyed plots, but she treats the subject of power within the context of women and children's lives in a patriarchal society.

This deviousness was necessary because many women readers would have been quite disturbed by a frontal attack on the social system which they took for granted, or on the institution of marriage; but they were not averse to seeing oppressive patriarchal power structures satirized. In their social world, conservative women condemned their more articulate Suffragette sisters while yet envying their freedom. Montgomery's small subversions make tidy "surgical strikes" without threatening to topple the overall system. A perfect example of indirect attack can be seen in "The Strike at Putney," one of Montgomery's some 500 short stories.<sup>17</sup> Here women disrupt the male power structure; eventually the men who run the church admit that they were unfair in refusing to

let a woman speaker use the church pulpit for an address, and subsequently the women return happily to their subordinate roles in the old power structure. Montgomery has shown her readers, however, that pompous, authoritarian men are helpless when women go on strike to assert their rights.

A **second** strategy Montgomery uses is to sugarcoat all of her subversive elements with humour. When Montgomery devotees explain today their affection for Montgomery, many cite this sense of humour. Her writing abounds with situational humour, verbal wit, and ironic and comic juxtapositions. She cleanses the souls of her readers by making them laugh. A nasty patriarch impaled by humour's hook ceases to threaten. Much of her humour arises because of the patriarchal structure of society. Here is a sample taken from a short story in *The chronicles of Avonlea* (1912). The speaker is a woman of middle-age who is being courted by an old beau, and she grumbles to another woman:

'I don't want to be married. Do you remember that story Anne Shirley used to tell long ago of the pupil who wanted to be a widow because "if you were married your husband bossed you and if you weren't married people called you an old maid?" Well, that is precisely my opinion. I'd like to be a widow. Then I'd have the freedom of the unmarried, with the kudos of the married. I could eat my cake and have it, too. Oh, to be a widow!' ('The end of a quarrel')

By using such humour to present the subordinate position of women after marriage, Montgomery avoids sounding like a crusading suffragette. However, something else is operating here, too, that makes her jibes against patriarchy unobjectionable to conventional readers: the careful distancing of the voice of L.M. Montgomery behind that of the person who supposedly makes the actual subversive statement. The above anecdote we are told originated with a child of indeterminate social status, was heard by the proper Anne Shirley who remembered it and passed it throughout the female-community where it was then overheard by our maiden lady; finally Montgomery's narrator repeats it for us in the story. No one takes responsibility for the statement or judges it. It's a safe comment, partly because it is presented in the layering of storyteller's anecdote.

Indeed, one of the characteristics that distinguishes Montgomery's writing is its "oral" quality. Montgomery had been raised in a family of gifted storytellers. Local gossip and clan history were very quickly elevated to polished oral narrative. Montgomery embeds secondary fictions throughout her surface narrative to create a distinctively layered structure which replicates the oral gossip of female gatherings. As readers we *love* hearing the risqué and unseemly things which get repeated, but such comments do not taint Montgomery herself since they are so far removed from her narrative voice. A minister's wife, as Montgomery was, could not be too careful in her choice of subjects, but she manages to bring into the sphere of literary discourse an amazing array of

rather shocking statements.

A **third** strategy is that of having characters of "no-importance" make the subversive comments. In the *Anne* series, Anne as a child makes outrageous comments and in this lies much of her personality. The minute Anne grows up and becomes the dignified wife, "Mrs. Dr. Gilbert Blythe," Montgomery sanitizes her thoughts and tongue and has her peppery, subversive comments delivered by people with less social standing in the community. Susan Baker, her cook, can express opinions that a proper, married Anne cannot. So can an unmarried eccentric like Miss Cornelia. Other unruly, motherless children like the Merediths are created for the same reason. It has been frequently claimed by critics that Montgomery's later *Anne* novels are not as good as the first; though this may appear true on the surface, for "Anne" loses her tartness, the novels do not lose their bite. We should note that Anne is simply no longer the focal character; she is only a device to hang the series together on. Montgomery keeps the later novels sparkling by devising a series of characters who can say or do what Anne cannot.<sup>18</sup>

This leads us to Montgomery's **fourth** strategy, her narrative method. Montgomery's plots – and there sometimes are no plots *per se* – are usually unoriginal, if not hackneyed. They depend heavily on unrealistic coincidence which is, of course, not uncommon in the romance genre. But plot is not important for her: her focus is on character, thoughts, feelings, and ideas. Since women in Montgomery's society were not expected even to *have* relevant independent thoughts, it was hard for fictional ones to create the action which propelled the novel. Women in Montgomery's later novels don't *cause* events to happen so much as *react* to what has happened, and then *discuss* it. For instance, in *Anne's house of dreams* Gilbert decides when and where they will move, etc.; the novel consists mostly of the rest of the characters talking about what has happened, is happening, or will happen in the community.

In a patriarchy, a woman's personal power lay largely in what she could manoeuvre by using language (flattery, nagging, or subtly manipulating her husband); women's public power lay in their being able to censure through community gossip. Patricia Meyer Spacks' *Gossip* gives an extended discussion of the function of gossip in women's lives and novels. Men may have controlled the law, but women could wreak havoc through the innuendoes of gossip. It was not only a source of entertainment but also it was a form of social control. In Montgomery's novels, people lived in fear of what others would say, as Montgomery herself did in her real life. In her novels, this female gossiping frequently produces a relatively non-linear plot progression, a pattern which Annis Pratt (11) sees as typical for women writers. In the Emily books it is not the surface events that are important: it is what Emily feels and thinks as she tries to accommodate her desire to be a writer to society's expectations that she marry and subordinate herself to a husband, not to art. Emily's feelings are complex and often rebellious, and although the narrative structure of

the book is vaguely chronological, her thought processes consist of a mental looping back and forth, not of a straightforward chronological advancing of events. The book is not the story of how Emily chooses a husband; it is the story of what she thinks along the way to her inevitable fate.

A **fifth** strategy, used primarily in the *Emily* books, is for Montgomery to intrude directly as narrator into the story and discredit the sanctity of traditional plot and genre conventions. For example, in *Emily of New Moon*, the narrator says, "This does not point...[to] any particular moral, of course; in a proper yarn Emily should either have been found out and punished for disobedience or been driven by an uneasy conscience to confess; but I am sorry – or ought to be – to have to state that Emily's conscience never worried her about the matter at all" (138).

An intrusive narrator who tells us that she disapproves of the conventions of the novel's formulae and that her heroine does not behave according to these is a rather bold disjunctive element in a 1920s domestic novel. Montgomery accomplishes a great deal with such a comment. She strikes up a personal, intimate relationship with the readers who feel they are the narrator's accomplice in the crime of flaunting convention. Montgomery and her readers know that wayward women and girls are fated to be punished in fictions about them, but another level of suspense is achieved through the suggestion that Emily may get away with unusual adventures. To approve of being "naughty," but only as Montgomery's accomplice, is very safe and appealing to a convention-bound reader.

In the oral tradition, establishing closeness between the narrator and the narratee is important. I have noticed that one of the most uniform elements among Montgomery's fans is their feeling of closeness to her. People who write us about her books and journals think of the author behind her works as a personal friend. There are many reasons why different people respond to her fiction, but they are all alike in feeling her a "kindred spirit" whose actual human presence lies in her writing – she is not seen as a distant, disembodied author. Here, in *Emily*, Montgomery is simply telling her readers that their approval of Emily's rebellious feelings is fine. She makes her readers her accomplices, part of the inner female circle, as she hints that she, the author, chafes at the restrictive conventions of the genre. Just as a postmodern writer of our time might do, Montgomery creates a secondary and self-reflexive discourse on the act of writing: she examines the fact that the "happy endings" of women's domestic romances are no more clichéd than the convention of the "tragic ending" in serious male fiction. She has a lot more to say about the conventions of the "realistic" novel, too. As Emily's mentor Mr. Carpenter lies dying, he says:

No use trying to please – critics. Live under your own hat. Don't be – led away – by those howls about realism. Remember – pine woods are just as real as – pigsties – and a darn sight pleasanter to be in. You'll get there – sometime – you have the root – of the matter

– in you. And don't – tell the world – everything. That's what's the – matter – with our – literature. Lost the charm and mystery – and reserve.

In Montgomery's journals she cites Morley Callaghan as the epitome of male realism become predictably tedious; he sees only pigsties and "latrines" and "insists blatantly that you see nothing else also. If you insist on seeing sky and river and pine you are a 'sentimentalist' and the truth is not in you" (Unpublished journals, December 30, 1928).

Closely related to the foregoing technique of narratorial intervention is her **sixth** device of having "respectable" characters within her novel verbally affirm the prevailing ideology of the society after her narrator and other less respectable characters have undercut it. This becomes complicated: (1) the genre sets up the expectations that the author will follow the standard conventions (2) the narrator or non-proper characters inside the novel subvert the conventions (3) then "respectable" characters like Anne reassure the readers that the conventional sentiments are correct.

For instance, in *Anne's house of dreams* the primary "subversive" character in the novel is Miss Cornelia, an avid "man-hater" who is forever saying, "Isn't it just like a man?" in condemnation, rightly or wrongly. She's highly eccentric, but as the country saying goes, she does quite often "hit the nail on the head." A full-fledged war between the sexes erupts when Dr. Gilbert Blythe suggests that Leslie Moore's husband be given a newly developed brain operation in hopes it might restore him to his rightful senses. Dick Moore is better as he is, with no mind, the women argue, than restored to his former hateful self. The men argue for the operation on the basis of reason and the women vigorously oppose it on the basis of emotion. To everyone's surprise, the operation is successful, and the newly conscious "Dick" tells them he is not in fact the Dick Moore they think he is. All the women eat humble pie, and Montgomery has Anne say, "Oh, Gilbert, you were right – so right. I can see that clearly enough now – and I'm so ashamed of myself – and will you ever really forgive me?" (232). The indiscriminating reader in the 1920s would feel reassured when Montgomery confirmed the prevailing ideology that women should always accept their husband's judgement as better than their own; however, Montgomery has made it perfectly clear that the operation could have been a disaster just as easily as a success, and it was chance, not moral strength, that made Gilbert right. And somehow the last word comes from the irascible Miss Cornelia, who snorts that Leslie Moore has sacrificed "the best years of her life to nursing...[a man] who hadn't any claim on her! Oh, drat the men! No matter what they do, it's the wrong thing. And no matter who they are, it's somebody they shouldn't be. They do exasperate me" (235). Thus, Dr. Gilbert Blythe's male superiority seems less certain after Montgomery pointedly reinforces first Anne's belief in it and then Miss Cornelia's disbelief.

Montgomery's journals show that no matter what her thoughts were she

comported herself as a highly conservative woman, not as a rabble-rousing women's rights firebrand. When Emily wrote in her diary that "it is a tradition of New Moon that its women should be equal to any situation and always be graceful and dignified" (*Emily climbs* 8), she was voicing Montgomery's own personal credo. Montgomery simultaneously admired suffragettes and looked askance at them. It is only honest to say that she was ambivalent about many of the social conventions she criticized. For instance, she thought she should obey her husband and accept his decisions even when she did not agree; she apparently maintained this belief even when he sank into irrationality with his mental problems. However, even though she let him make the decisions, people who remember them, and knew the family dynamics, say that the force of her opinion, even if unexpressed, was so strong that he could not fail to take it into account in making up his own mind. However, as her husband receded deeper into mental illness, she took over more of the decision-making process although she always attempted to make him feel the final word had been his.

The training she had had as a child continued to influence her to conform to social norms, but her reason told her that it was wrong for an intelligent woman to have to accept her husband's every decision as superior. It is her conscious mind that so deftly exposes the irrationality of the myth of male superiority in her writing while Miss Cornelia, like a funny subconscious, has the last word.

A **seventh** subversive strategy is a curious one. Montgomery often presents her most overbearing authority figures in women's clothing. In fact, there aren't many convincingly realistic men in Montgomery's narratives, and the ones who are there are often minor or shadowy characters. On the other hand, there are two types of very realistic women: the submissive, feminine types and the authoritarian mannish types who mimic the male prerogative to rule. Her fiction often presents two sisters who live together: one rules and the other submits. Such is the case in the *Emily* books, and we are told explicitly several times that Aunt Elizabeth Murray, who is the tall, angular authority figure, is made in the image of her formidable father, Archibald Murray. Aunt Elizabeth bosses little Emily about, making her life miserable through her authoritarian ways. Aunt Elizabeth's autocratic behaviour would have been unnoteworthy in a man of the time, but it looms unnatural and unacceptable in a woman. The reader can see how grotesque the behaviour is precisely because a woman enacts it. As a foil for mannish Aunt Elizabeth, Montgomery gives us Aunt Laura who is gentle, sympathetic and feminine. Montgomery can present what she considers objectionable authoritarian male characteristics with impunity because she disguises them in the female form of Elizabeth Murray, chip off the block of old Alexander Murray.

An **eighth** strategy is to embed allusions and references to other authors and books – often subversive – throughout the text; if the reader knows the other works, these comment indirectly on the action within Montgomery's

story. For instance, Montgomery read, reread, and was deeply moved by Olive Schreiner's *The story of an African farm* (1883), a novel which, between 1883 and 1900, sold over 100,000 copies and upset most of the orthodoxies of its Victorian age (Pierpont 69-83). Montgomery's reference to it in *Emily's quest* bears curiously on what happens to one of the important characters, the impossibly jealous and neurotic Mrs. Kent, whose husband had left her years earlier. We wonder if Montgomery may have intended to suggest that Mrs. Kent's whole life might have been less miserable had she had only opened Schreiner's book after it was returned to her among her dead husband's effects. It contained a letter from her husband forgiving her for what appears to have been her possessive, manipulative behaviour. We can conjecture that when *he* read Schreiner, he may have developed new sympathy for women and then have been able to forgive his wife, for one of Schreiner's main aims in this novel was to show how badly men treated women.

A subtle but perceptible intertextual discourse also operates between Montgomery's *Emily* books and other women-authored narratives which also deal with the way a woman can get on in a world which sees her as worthless unless she obtains a man and becomes his property. All her life Montgomery had been fascinated by the Brontë sisters. Her allusions to *Jane Eyre* figure large in the *Emily* books. When this trilogy was written in the 1920s, Montgomery had barely escaped marriage to one self-absorbed man, Edwin Simpson, and she had been yoked in her marriage for over a decade to a minister whose mental illness brought on another destructive kind of turning inward. It is no accident that elements of the similarly self-absorbed minister St. John Rivers appear in *Emily's* lovers, particularly Dean Priest. In fact, Montgomery wants to make sure that we don't miss the connections between her book and Brontë's. For instance, when Dean first saves Emily from falling into the ocean, he claims her life as his. Significantly, she fell only because she had reached over a dangerous cliff to pick a beautiful wild aster. Dean remarks: "Your life belongs to me henceforth. Since I saved it it's mine. Never forget that." Emily felt an odd sensation of rebellion. She didn't fancy the idea of her life belonging to anybody but herself" (*Emily of New Moon* 281).

Dean sees this and says jokingly, "one pays a penalty when one reaches out for something beyond the ordinary. One pays for it in bondage of some kind or other. Take your wonderful aster home and keep it as long as you can. It has cost you your freedom" (281).

Montgomery as narrator tells us that, "He was laughing – he was only joking, of course – yet Emily felt as if a cobweb fetter had been flung round her. Yielding to a sudden impulse she flung the big aster on the ground and set her foot on it..." Dean "stooped and picked up the broken aster. Emily's heel had met it squarely and it was badly crushed. But he put it away that night between the leaves of an old volume of *Jane Eyre*" (282). This reference makes clear that Dean, like the would-be master of "Jane Eyre," wants to take

his little wild flower and press her between the leaves of his own life. There would be no room for a woman's growth, either in marriage to Brontë's Rivers or to Montgomery's Priest.

Maud Montgomery had been a bookish child and young woman who lived vicariously and intensely in the fictional worlds she read about. It is not surprising, therefore, that the febrile language in *Jane Eyre* echoes faintly through Montgomery's description of her own wedding day in her journal:

...sitting there by my husband's side...I felt a sudden horrible inrush of *rebellion and despair*. I wanted to be free! I felt like a prisoner – a hopeless prisoner. Something in me – something wild and free and untamed – something that Ewan had not tamed – could never tame – something that did not acknowledge him as master – rose up in one frantic protest against the fetters which bound me. At that moment if I could have torn the wedding ring from my finger and so freed myself I would have done it! But it was too late – and the realization that it was too late fell over me like a black cloud of wretchedness. I sat at that gay bridal feast, in my white veil and orange blossoms, beside the man I had married – and I was as unhappy as I had ever been in my life (May 23, 1911).

Montgomery's words in her journal depict how a gifted and imaginative female artist of her era must have felt when she entered into a traditional marriage. By the time of her marriage Montgomery had become a world-famous author with a large private income, and she knew she was marrying a stodgy man who was well educated in theology but who had no wider intellectual interests: he was kind and not unintelligent, but otherwise unexceptional. When she sat down a decade later and penned her story of little Emily, she remembered all her own decisions and the hardships she had gone through to become and remain a writer. On July 20, 1922, she wrote in her journals, "I packed *Emily* [of *New Moon*] off on her journey to the portals of the world – dear little *Emily* whom I love far better than I ever loved *Anne*. I felt as if I were sending part of myself..." On August 29, 1923, after *Emily* begins getting good reviews, she admits in her journal, "Emily's inner life was my own, though outwardly most of the events and incidents were fictitious."

It is instructive, in this context, to note the journal comments that she makes about her husband at the time she is writing *Emily*. On March 25, 1922, she writes:

Whenever we have been anywhere that an allusion was made to my literary success Ewan has invariably greeted it with a little jibe or deprecating joke....Ewan's attitude to women – though I believe he is quite unconscious of this himself – is that of the medieval mind. A woman is a thing of no importance intellectually – the plaything and servant of man – and couldn't possibly do anything that would be worthy of a real tribute....Ewan has never had any real sympathy with or intelligent interest in my literary work and has always seemed either incredulous or resentful when anyone has attributed to me any importance on the score of it.

Thus, we can see that in writing her own story into Emily's, Montgomery is affirming the importance of her own individuality as a writing female. As well, the perceptive adult reader can see that not only is *Jane Eyre* a presence in Montgomery's *Emily* series, but the character of Jane Eyre is a presence in Montgomery's own mind. Brontë's character gave young Maud a model of female independence which took root and grew in both Montgomery and "Emily." Jane's language shaped Montgomery's, and Jane's struggle to develop and affirm her personal worth informed Montgomery's personal conception of female possibility and strength. Intertextuality is both literary and personal.

We now come to Montgomery's **ninth** strategy. She writes the expected "happy endings" which reassure her readers, but she even undercuts these in some of her novels. Montgomery's happy endings do not necessarily betoken sentimentality. She knew too well how to introduce hidden agendas – "discourses of rebellion" under the "discourses of submission." Montgomery does this not only with the controlling structure of her novels but also with the specific motif of the happy ending of marriage to which her heroine must submit.

Rachel DuPlessis notes in *Writing beyond the ending* that in a patriarchal society a female artist's *bildung* is antithetical to marriage. Marriage requires self-sacrifice and submission, whereas becoming a writer-artist demands self-assertion. In fact, marriage usually becomes a barrier to female achievement for any ambitious and gifted woman in a patriarchal society. This is very noticeable in the conclusion of the *Emily* series, a trilogy which makes up a *Künstlerroman*.

Emily Bird Starr, the sensitive and artistic little girl whose beloved father is dying, is left to be raised by her dead mother's clan, the Murrays, a threesome consisting of the two sisters, Aunt Elizabeth, Aunt Laura, and "simple" Cousin Jimmy. Cousin Jimmy is dominated by the authoritarian and aggressive Elizabeth, but he is in fact far from simple: he gives Emily the needed paper on which to write and he softens Emily's painful encounters with Aunt Elizabeth by his commonsensical advice. The Murrays are proud of their "traditions," but Aunt Elizabeth is so inimical to an imaginative life, and most specifically to creative endeavour, that she makes Emily promise to give up writing stories in exchange for permission to go to school.

In the first two *Emily* books, Emily runs the whole gamut of barriers to female artistic achievement. She is belittled, ridiculed, bullied, forbidden to write, even forbidden to think, mostly by Aunt Elizabeth. Predictably, she seeks an escape. As soon as she is old enough, she accepts an unfortunate engagement to Dean Priest<sup>19</sup> who offers Emily enormous wealth and his all-consuming passion; *all* he asks is that she pour the passion she has for writing into loving him, and that she forget her writing completely, *forever*. Dean tricks Emily into believing that she cannot write because he is jealous of her love for her writing. He demotes her to a sex-object by telling her, "You can do more

with those eyes – that smile – than you can ever do with your pen" (EQ 37). Later he says of her first unpublished novel which she gives him to read,

It's a pretty little story, Emily. Pretty and flimsy and ephemeral as a rose-tinted cloud. Cobwebs – only cobwebs. The whole conception is too far-fetched. Fairy tales are out of the fashion. And this one of yours makes overmuch of a demand on the credulity of the reader. And your characters are only puppets. How could you write a real story? You've never *lived*.

Only after she breaks her engagement with him, does he tell her the truth:

You remember that books of yours? You asked me to tell you the truth about what I thought of it? I didn't. I lied. It is a good piece of work – very good. Oh, some faults in it of course, – a bit emotional – a bit overstrained. You still need pruning – restraint. But it is good. It is out of the ordinary both in conception and development. It has charm and your characters *do* live. Natural, human, delightful. There, you know what I think of it now." (111)

For all his deception, however, Dean has helped her mature and come to some degree of self-understanding; yet, he embodies the worst features of both the early Rochester and St. John Rivers, the suitors in *Jane Eyre*. Marriage and men threaten Emily even more than mannish Aunt Elizabeth did. Aunt Elizabeth only stiffened Emily's resolve; Dean destroyed her courage.

At the end of the *Emily* trilogy, Emily will of course have to find a man who can be her master; she will have to settle down to focusing on him and their marriage and not on her own art. The happy ending will restore the social order where women and children are in their proper place. If Montgomery is going to satisfy her readers, her young heroines must come around and do what their culture demands of them: get married to promising young men rather than strike out on their own. In the genre of the domestic romance, the closure of marriage rewarded good girls. The closure of marriage was both Montgomery's and Emily's fate. However, it is clear that Montgomery does not believe that a woman's wedding day is always the dreamy ideal ending of "romance". By the time that she was writing her *Emily* series, she could see what a mistake she had made in her own marriage.

Although Montgomery had read feminist texts in the 1890s, she had been thoroughly indoctrinated during her childhood with the "Angel in the House" ideology – that a woman's place was in the home and that her duty was to be cheerful and long-suffering.<sup>20</sup> She noted in her October 15, 1908, journal entry that a reviewer praised *Anne of Green Gables* because it "radiates happiness and optimism." She continued: "Thank God, I can keep the shadows of my life out of my work. I would not wish to darken any other life – I want instead to be a messenger of optimism and sunshine" (339, *The selected journals...*, Volume I.) There was a connection between her role as a woman in being cheerful and her role as an author in putting cheerful "endings" onto her books, as

the romance required. But by the time that she was writing *Emily* in the 1920s her own experience in marriage, and her observation of other marriages, made it very clear to her that marriage and a woman's subservience in it did not always lead to happiness. In the last section of *Emily's quest* we see her using two techniques to undercut her "happy ending."

First, she embeds a metafictional discourse on happy endings in the actual text. In Chapter 17 a self-important male author proposes to Emily who herself is already a published and best-selling author. His proposal concludes with the gushy endearment that he will teach her "never to write happy endings – never....I will teach you the beauty and artistry of sorrow and incompleteness. Ah, what a pupil you will be! What bliss to teach such a pupil! I kiss your hand" (155). Emily punctures his pompous proposal with the statement that he "must be crazy" and boots him out, giving him the real-life jolt of a beautifully tragic ending for his would-be romance. The scene is very comic and reflects a bitter clash in the real world between women like Montgomery who were patronized for writing romances and male writers who wrote only realism, following the dictates of the then-trendy literary Modernism.

Montgomery's second trick for undercutting the unpalatable closure is to shift into farce and make the wedding ceremony in *Emily's quest* so ridiculous that all semblance of the earlier seriousness in the novel is lost. A cultural historian might say that Montgomery's own era should have found the marriage of Emily very satisfactory: Teddy has become a distinguished artist and he has been made even more respectable by being offered an art-school vice-principalship in Montreal. I cannot accept that Montgomery herself saw the ending as idyllic, however, for the trilogy's tone shifts rapidly. The first two Emily books were firmly grounded in PEI society, circa 1890, with local colour and vivid characterization. The conversations between characters were tart and plausible, and the events believable. Yet, the last Emily book slides into a comedic mode. Its dénouement is more than unbelievable coincidence – it is pure slapstick, with shifts in romantic partners, as in Shakespeare's *A midsummer night's dream* – a play that Montgomery had loved as a young student, by the way. Just as Emily's best-friend Ilse is on the point of marrying Teddy Kent, long a suitor of Emily, Ilse jumps out the window, slides down the roof in her silk wedding dress, and vanishes into the distance, leaving a room of gaping wedding guests and a surprised bridegroom behind. This ending is so ridiculous and so fast-paced that the seriousness of the situation is completely trivialized. The marriage vows are put into a farcical context. Lest the reader miss the shift of tone, Montgomery has the jilted groom speak of his intended having "left...[him] at the altar according to the very formula of Bertha M. Clay," a formulaic and now forgotten writer.<sup>21</sup> No further apologies are given, but Montgomery has made it very clear that she is not responsible for such a trite ending. The trite is identified with this dollop of slapstick and hence subverted. By alerting the readers to the fact that she does

not take the ending of her novel seriously, Montgomery suggests that they should not either. When Emily finally accepts the jilted Teddy, no idyllic atmosphere is restored. In fact, the tone is almost elegiac against the backdrop of a dark hill and a sunset, as Teddy and Emily prepare to move into their grey house which, significantly, has always been called "The Disappointed House." Montgomery tells the reader that the "grey house will be disappointed no longer," but the reader knows that Emily's creativity will sink into grey domesticity within. The vivacious outspoken Emily-heroine with the accomplished and witty pen is dead, and the trilogy can end: she is no longer interesting or full of promise as a writer. She is ready to be a supportive wife whose husband's profession comes first.

It is important to note that writing her fictions normally provided Montgomery with a soul-satisfying escape from the tensions in her real life, but writing *Emily's quest* seems to have been a trial, not a joy. In fact, and not surprisingly, she suffered unusual blockage before she began it, and had to write another novel which unblocked her first. It must have been a grim day for her when she sat down to begin *Emily's quest*. First she had to domesticate Emily. This meant that Emily had to give up her ambitions to write. Dean Priest had to persuade her that because she had no talent she should give up her writing for marriage. That was the first step. He succeeded in convincing her to destroy the manuscript of her first book. Then came step two. Emily tripped over a sewing basket at the top of the stairs, tumbled down, and landed with a pair of scissors piercing her foot. Scissors, a symbol of woman's domesticity, appropriately gave her blood poisoning. She had to spend her winter in bed recuperating. Her "rest-cure" sounds rather like those proscribed by the real life Dr. Weir-Mitchell who was the apparent model for Charlotte Perkins Gillman's famous feminist story "The Yellow Wallpaper."<sup>22</sup> Montgomery's imagery makes *her* opinion of Emily's choice quite clear.

Not only did it go against the Montgomery grain to submit Emily to a formulaic happy-wedding ending. It was painful for Montgomery to make her feisty little alter-ego into a creature of bland domesticity. Certainly, the self-assertive Emily of the first two books would not have been a suitably selfless wife, an "Angel in the House."<sup>23</sup> Montgomery's beloved Emily was already – as she herself had been – a successful author when it came time to marry her into oblivion and to end the book. It would hardly do for Emily to feel as she, Maud Montgomery, had at her own wedding. Thus, Teddy Kent, Emily's intended, had to subsume Emily's role as the artist figure.

She knew from personal experience that no creative female would want to give up writing when it was her income, her means of self-expression, and her very identity. So she tried to suggest that Emily's uniqueness would live in Teddy's art: he would take his inspiration from Emily's face and its "elusive mystery." If Emily had not been an artist in her own right, this might have been acceptable, but since she was, it was problematical to reduce her to an

object, a beautiful human face, which a male artist could turn into something timeless, a pictorial icon. Elevating Teddy's painting over Emily's writing is simply not satisfactory, and it was little wonder that Montgomery had a hard time finishing off the final book. On June 30, 1926, she wrote grimly: "I began work – again – on *Emily III*. I wonder if I shall *ever* get that book done!" On October 13, 1926, she breathed a sigh of relief: "Yesterday morning I actually finished writing *Emily's quest*. Of course I have to revise it yet but it is such a relief to feel it is off my mind at last. I've never had such a time writing a book. Thank heavens it is the last of the Emily series" (unpublished journals).

In the third Emily book, after numerous other proposals, Emily manages to marry a childhood friend, Teddy Kent, an artist of growing fame. Of the choices Emily has, Teddy is the only serious contender.<sup>24</sup> The only problem with him is that he is totally absorbed in himself and his own art. Although he puts Emily's haunting face into every picture that he paints, it is not clear that he ever sees the real Emily, though Montgomery makes various attempts to redeem him as a suitable groom. Just as Montgomery's husband was absorbed by the demons in his mental illness at the time she was writing this series, Teddy is absorbed by his own creative life. Many young girls reading the *Emily* trilogy today have told me that they feel vaguely unhappy with the way the novel concludes, though it is idyllic on the surface.<sup>25</sup> Their uneasiness comes from the implication that Emily's creativity will be eclipsed in marriage.

Finally, we come to a very complicated technique which is perhaps less a conscious strategy than a telling sequence. The order in which Montgomery's *Emily* books are written reveals how complex the creative processes become when Montgomery had to pack her material into an inappropriate genre.

We recall that the first *Emily* book was published in 1923, the second in 1925, the third in 1927. It is extremely significant, then, that in 1926 – after the first two *Emily* books and before the third – Montgomery stopped to write *The blue castle*. I think that Montgomery had simply poured too much of her own psychic energy into Emily's successful assaults on the patriarchal culture which sought to marginalize women and especially female artists. She hated to face the inevitability of leading Emily to the sacrificial altar of marriage. Emily was posited in the first two books as fighting for her artistic life and wanting to be taken seriously as a writer. Emily's world had been all against her; and in spite of this she had achieved a legitimate existence as an artist-figure, a writer of note. Now, literary convention demanded that Emily's self-development be effaced, with her literally reduced to being an inspiring female "face" in a male artist's repertoire. Montgomery did not want to kill Emily's spirit. But this is what the genre dictated, and what her publisher and readership expected. She had no alternatives.

Thus, *The blue castle* comes next instead of *Emily's quest*. What is *in* this book which interrupts Emily's tale, and permits Montgomery to forestall Emily's inevitable fate of marginalization and effacement? Tucking *The blue*

*castle* in before the third *Emily* book, Montgomery blows off the steam that had been gathering as she faced the unhappy prospect of marrying off Emily. *The blue castle* becomes part of the *Emily* series: the foursome forms a critique of patriarchal society.

*The blue castle* is an unadulterated and bitter assault on the patriarchal system of Montgomery's era, one which oppressed women psychologically and economically. In *The blue castle*, Montgomery sublimates the anger she feels towards her own maternal uncles and her maternal grandfather. The first part of *The blue castle* shows the heroine, Valancy Stirling, oppressed by an entire clan, men and wives alike, because she has failed to catch a husband. The reader hears every vicious comment that is made to her. Her relatives belittle her, chastise her, shame her. Montgomery downplays the bite of her satire, as she often does, through the use of humour, but the reader ascertains that the author of this book was one very angry woman when she wrote those wickedly funny lines. In no other book does Montgomery's anger come through so clearly.

The second phase of the plot shows Valancy doing the worst things she can do, as far as her clan is concerned. She asserts herself and leaves; she commits the scandalous act of nursing a dying girl who gave birth out of wedlock;<sup>26</sup> she proposes to a man of unknown and doubtful character and marries him. As long as Valancy had been among them, the clan could enjoy pecking at her wounds, but after she escapes they are without their victim.

The first part of the novel reads as sharp social satire, and it seems that Montgomery might herself be moving to the realistic novel which was then in vogue. Suddenly, Montgomery changes the tone of the novel, and shifts back to the easy flow of romance. Valancy marries, is thoroughly and completely happy in her marriage, and she spends all of her time in domestic bliss. It's rather startling to have the tone and genre change so suddenly. To satirize marriage and patriarchy and then dump one's heroine into a marriage seems odd, to say the least. However, there are some references to the Bluebeard legend, and the reader does begin to wonder what Valancy's husband keeps in the room he will not allow her to enter. Perhaps this wayward Valancy will end up dead, as indeed she should, since she has flaunted social convention.

Finally, in the last 30 pages, so many improbable coincidences and surprises occur that even the most glib reader knows that Montgomery is playing games. This novel which began as an angry and biting satire of a patriarchal society ends up as a spoof on romance. Or perhaps it is a joke on the reader who demands romance, for the man Valancy has married turns out to be a writer of books which are remarkably like Montgomery's own. He writes purple passages about nature and he espouses "female" values like sensitivity and nurturing. He is as gentle as the patriarchal uncles and their accommodating wives were overbearing. If Emily's Aunt Elizabeth was a man in woman's clothing, Valancy's husband is a woman in man's clothing. It's

Montgomery's transvestite trick again, her playing with the gender stereotypes of her era. Among other things, Valancy's husband has rejected the values of his father, a wealthy entrepreneur and businessman: the world of power, money, and of "real" men. But since he will still inherit his father's millions, Valancy's grasping, materialistic clan is delighted and they make utter fools of themselves in turning about-face. Thus, Montgomery gives her publishers and readers their happy ending of marriage, but she undercuts the stereotypical image of masculinity as much as she can when she devises her hero. It's not unlike Charlotte Brontë's alteration of Rochester into a different kind of man at the end of *Jane Eyre*. Montgomery emasculates her man, too, into a sensitive person with the values that her patriarchal society would restrict to sentimental women.

In *The blue castle* other disjunctive elements are used: Valancy gets married in green, with an unkempt groom who has agreed to marry her out of pity. In the end, romantic love does release Valancy, as Montgomery herself believed it should, if one only found and married the right partner. But the ending has complex undertones, as does the entire novel.

Thus, when Montgomery began the novel in a realistic mode, but shifted to the unbelievable coincidences of romance, she created subversions which eroded the trajectory of romance, while conforming to it outwardly. Her discourses are not only the obvious ones put into the characters' mouths, but they are of a more subtle order – between the conventions of realism and those of domestic romance. She satisfies her readers and has her revenge at the same time.

It is likely that Montgomery dispelled some of her own pent-up anger in the actual act of writing out *The blue castle*. When her lampooning of the uncles threatened to become too virulent, Montgomery softened her attack with humour, effectively telling the readers that she did not mean what she was saying. And she reverted to her genre of domestic romance partway through the novel. Montgomery was cautious and conventional as a minister's wife and too much in need of money, as well, to risk sustained vicious satire. She did not want to alienate her readers or her publishers. But she was too angry to completely repress her feelings. We glimpse these in *The blue castle*. Hence, its power. Many, many Montgomery fans say it is their favourite book. So does, perhaps, the entire nation of Poland which voted the play based on it as the most popular musical stage play in Poland in 1990.

At the beginning of this article, I spoke about Montgomery's books having a political dimension in Poland.<sup>27</sup> I only began to feel *The blue castle*'s power when I viewed it on the stage in Poland in 1984, when Russian communism still oppressed the Polish nation, and Lech Walesa's Solidarity was pitted against the official government. This musical had its Cracow premiere in 1982, and has continued playing continuously as one of Poland's most successful stage plays since then. It had an especial bite because of its production in his-

torical Poland. The Polish *Blue castle* took on the aura of allegory when it pitted the powerful clan against the powerless Valancy. On stage, Valancy seemed to symbolize the Polish nation as she sang hopelessly of her "blue castle" where she could have freedom from the overbearing, restrictive, destructive clan which policed her actions and thoughts. Her voice and the music became a disembodied longing for freedom from centuries of oppression all massed into and represented by her horrible clan. The play had a subtext which the Polish nation well understood, having lived in the crossroads of Europe under the heels of invaders for centuries. Polish theatre had been long accustomed to speaking its politically dangerous frustrations and anger through theatrical subtexts, and Montgomery's *The blue castle* provided the perfect vehicle. How could their censors object to this harmless fiction about 19th century Scots in Canada? It was just a sentimental love story, at least on the surface! I shall never forget the atmosphere in the Cracow theatre when Valancy freed herself from the clan, became self-determining, and sang of her freedom: it was as if – for the moment, at least – the people in the audience dared hope that they, too, might eventually achieve what Valancy had achieved – freedom from oppression. The atmosphere was charged with energy as the glorious and triumphant music swelled and rolled over the audience.

Those of us who saw the production were quite surprised that Montgomery's book had become part of a subversive political agenda in Poland and that she was such a cult figure there. Her books were in such short supply that whenever the publishers acquired enough paper to print more, they then sold through the Polish underground. It was even more surprising to learn that the government had tried (unsuccessfully) to block Montgomery's books after World War II.<sup>28</sup> Montgomery – the woman Canadians thought wrote only *sentimental fictions for children*? I recall Montgomery's words in *Emily's quest*: "she [Emily] must reach her audience through many artificial mediums" (2). The political conditions of 1980's Poland do not operate in Canada. Nevertheless, an attack on authoritarianism appeals to children and women who have felt oppressed: all can see their own enemy in Montgomery's story if they choose to.

Thus, we can see how Montgomery's various methods provide a critique of the values of her patriarchal society. In these books, she turns her closures into farce. She uses the hackneyed plots of romance, but her stories push against these formal constraints. Her allusions, references, images, and comments threaten again and again to disrupt the trajectory of romance – if in no other way than by sending the reader off into a search for significant intertextualities. The energy in her books comes partly from these collisions between genre and subject. Thus, her narratology is far more sophisticated than appears on the surface. When Montgomery begins her *Emily* novels with a realistic heroine whose "Bildung" into a female-artist figure is incompatible with her inevitable fate (marriage), she challenges her culture's views about women.

Montgomery plays the literary and social games of her society with superb finesse, producing novels that conform on one level to the expected conventions while at the same time skilfully subverting the triteness of the domestic romance.

She may have written, as she tells us, in an "artificial medium," but behind it we find that L.M. Montgomery is a cleverly political writer who used the material of women's domestic lives to question their inferior status in a patriarchal culture. She stole by stealth into the august house of fiction where 19th century female writers like Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë had already staked out claims to small attic rooms while the male literary giants like Henry James and Thackeray held forth in the pretentious drawing rooms below. Entering this house in the early part of the 20th century, Montgomery found her own small room, decorated it simply, and established herself in it. She remained unobtrusive as she wrote easily and prolifically within the traditional genres of romance, camouflaging her subtle agenda of empowerment with humour and with the unpretentious language of the oral storyteller. Next door to her was Virginia Woolf, painfully toiling to find significant new forms, but writing out of many of the same concerns. What the serious male writers in the drawing rooms did not notice – they were too busy fulsomely discussing each others' books – was that much of their audience was slipping upstairs to listen to the tales of the scribbling women. These women were quietly creating a literature of their own.

#### NOTES

- 1 This article (excluding the Woolf material) was first given in March 1988 as an informal lecture at the University of Ottawa. An adaptation of one part of it was delivered as a formal conference paper at the International Research Society for Children's Literature in Salamanca, Spain, in September 1989.
- 2 Chapter 6, "To 'bear my mother's name': *Künstlerromane* by women writers," provides theoretical material that can be related to Montgomery's *Emily* trilogy.
- 3 Page references are to the 1970s McClelland & Stewart "Canadian Favourites" editions of each book.
- 4 Carol Shields was raised in Oak Park, Illinois, so her mother's comment reflects an American view.
- 5 A full-page article on Montgomery's reception in Sweden can be found in Ami Lönnroth's "Halva himlens frihetshjältinna," *Svenska dagbladet*, March 8, 1991. The release of the Åhmansson book on Montgomery occasioned this full-page article in Sweden's foremost newspaper.
- 6 Newspapers and radio/television stations around the world gave coverage to the story. See newspaper accounts in: Ben Hills, "Thorn Birds Colleen in book plot row," *Melbourne Herald* (Australia) 19 Jan. 1988: 1-(?); "Is McCullough novel based on story by Green Gables' author?" *The gazette* (Montreal) 16 Jan. 1988: B-9; Anna Pukas, "The riddle of Ms. Thorn Birds!" *Daily mail* (London, England) 11(?) Jan. 1988: [page unknown]; H. J. Kirchoff, "Echoes of Montgomery in McCullough novel?" *The globe and mail* (Toronto) 15 Jan. 1988: D 8. Radio Melbourne gave the controversy a thorough airing, as did stations in the United States and Canada. In Feb. 1988 an Australian TV crew came to PEI to explore similarities between McCul-

- lough's book and Montgomery's for "Sixty Minutes," a current affairs program in Australia, and in Canada it was covered by CBC Television's "Fifth Estate."
- 7 Her statement to her publishers, Harper and Row (New York), made an excellent point which applies to many writers: "A creative writer is the sum total of what he or she absorbs from their earliest years. It goes without saying...that there are moments in any creative career when the subconscious resonates with buried data and out comes something new, but owing part of itself to what has gone before, whether in one's own life, or the lives of others, real or imagined."
  - 8 For accounts of this, see Patricia Orwen's article "Kindred Spirits" and Kate Taylor's "Anne of Hokkaido."
  - 9 Virginia Woolf's fiction is in the group with artificially stimulated sales because her books are on university courses.
  - 10 Montgomery's journals recount how scholars like Prof. Pelham Edgar scorned her work during her Toronto years. Åhmansson's book gives a very good analysis of the critical reception of Montgomery's work.
  - 11 When *The selected journals of L.M. Montgomery* were published, it was only one lone male reviewer who said that the "Introduction" should not have taken for granted that readers would actually know the Montgomery novels. Female reviewers of course did know them.
  - 12 Elizabeth Waterston was the first scholar to give serious critical attention to Montgomery's work in a book entitled *The clear spirit: twenty Canadian women and their times*. This ground-breaking book was the Centennial Project of the Canadian Federation of University Women in 1966. But in 1966, well-meaning older male colleagues tried to dissuade her from wasting her time on Montgomery.
  - 13 See Elaine Showalter's *A literature of their own* for an extended account of this.
  - 14 And not only women authors of an earlier age. A contemporary Canadian playwright has mentioned to me that the *Emily* books were important to him because they showed one could get rejections and still be successful.
  - 15 Bishop lists about 1500 books that Virginia Woolf refers to during her lifetime from all sources in his *Chronology*. Montgomery records the titles of approximately 500 books which she read between 1889 and 1942 in her journals, and she almost always discusses them. But she mentions having several thousand books at one time, and her son said she often read a book a day, even when busy. There is no comprehensive list of books she read compiled from other sources, but Rea Wilmhurst has been compiling a list of all the books alluded to (by name or by a quote taken from it). A checklist of books referred to in the *Anne* books appears in *CCL* # 56. Both Woolf and Montgomery were compulsive readers, but Woolf had access to outré books that Montgomery did not.
  - 16 See Showalter, p. 33.
  - 17 This story, adapted into a witty stage play by Charlottetown playwright Jane Wilson in 1990, played at the Charlottetown Festival mainstage.
  - 18 For an explication of this, see Rosamund Bailey's article.
  - 19 Showalter would undoubtedly put "Jarback" Priest in her second group of women's men, the "collateral descendants of Scott's dark heroes and Byron's Corsair, but direct descendants of Edward Fairfax Rochester" (139). She talks about how *Jane Eyre's* influence became international, and these types of heroes appeared everywhere, showing their family-resemblance to his predecessors: they are "not conventionally handsome, and often downright ugly; they have piercing eyes; they are brusque and cynical in speech, impetuous in action. Thrilling the heroine with their rebellion and power, they simultaneously appeal to her reforming energies." They can be at once "sardonic, sarcastic, satanic, and seraphic" (140).

- 20 In fact, when she was interviewed in Boston, during a visit to her publisher in 1910, she was quoted as saying: "I am a quiet, plain sort of person and while I believe a woman, if intelligent, should be allowed to vote, I would have no use for suffrage myself. I have no aspirations to become a politician. I believe a woman's place is in the home" (Red scrapbook #1: 1910-1914). She probably believed this, at least in part, though the fact that she was pressed to make a public statement for a newspaper would have made her more conservative. By the mid-twenties, when she was writing the *Emily* trilogy, she has come to see how confining this ideology can be when a woman marries the wrong man in the wrong occupation.
- 21 In her diary entry of August 24, 1896, Montgomery is at Park Corner, everyone is away, and it is raining, and she says, "I have read everything that is readable in the house, including several 'shilling shockings' by Bertha M. Clay and others of that ilk, so you may realize to what straits I am reduced."
- 22 See an account of this in Showalter (274).
- 23 Showalter traces the development of this ideal of Victorian womanhood: "a Perfect Lady, an Angel in the House, contentedly submissive to men, but strong in her inner purity and religiosity, queen in her own realm of the House" (14).
- 24 Perry Miller did not have enough social status to deserve a Murray of "New Moon" although he had many positive merits.
- 25 A clipping in Montgomery's "Clipping Book" states: "L.M. Montgomery, whose charming story of love in an elysian Canadian summer 'Blue Castle' has just been published by Stokes, writes that she is busy now on the third Emily book and a 'dreadful time I am having, too, with all her beaux. Her love affairs won't run straight. Then, too, I'm bombarded with letters from girls who implore me to let her marry Dean, not Teddy. But she is set on Teddy herself so what am I to do? One letter recently was quite unique. All previous letters have implored me to write 'more about Emily, no matter whom she marries,' but the writer of this begged me not to write another Emily book because she felt sure if I did she would marry Teddy and she (the writer) couldn't bear it" (268, clipping book). Note: Montgomery blames the final marriage to Teddy on Emily who is a product of her culture. She as author does not defend it.
- 26 This feature resulted in *The blue castle* being subject to censorship after it was published. Several older women have told me that they were not allowed to read it.
- 27 An article in issue #46 of *CCL* presents many reasons why the Polish nation has taken a particular liking to Montgomery's works and *The blue castle* in particular. This article, written by Barbara Wachowicz, the Polish writer who adapted Montgomery's book into a musical stage play, was published in 1987, before the long dark "Stalinist night" was over and Communism collapsed. Her article stresses positive elements of Montgomery – her love of home, beauty, friendship, etc. – and skirts over any possible political innuendos.
- 28 There is an account of this in the Polish M.A. thesis mentioned earlier, and Barbara Wachowicz's article covers it, too.

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**Mary Rubio** is Co-editor (with Elizabeth Waterston) of *The selected journals of L.M. Montgomery, Volume I and II (1985 and 1987)*. Volume III will be published in 1992. She is working on the authorized biography of L.M. Montgomery.