"Reaching beyond the Word": Religious Themes as "Deep Structure" in the "Anne" Books of L.M. Montgomery

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Résumé: *L'auteur soutient que les convictions religieuses de L.M. Montgomery peuvent expliquer la structure narrative "profonde" de ses oeuvres narratives. Empruntant sa méthodologie à des théoriciens comme Mieke Bal, Mikhaïl Bakhtine et Paul Ricoeur, elle s'attache à démontrer que, dans quatre des romans-clés, la densité métaphorique s'appuie sur une spiritualité se percevant tel "un palimpseste caché sous les strates de sens qui fondent le récit".*

Summary: *This article argues that Montgomery's system of religious belief provides the "deep structure" which gives her novels thematic consistency, inspiring the poetics of setting, the actions of characters, and the dynamics of narrative. Using literary theorists such as Mieke Bal, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Paul Ricoeur, as well as religious philosophers such as Martin Heidegger and Kevin Hart, Rosemary Johnston then gives close readings of four key Montgomery novels, demonstrating how they illustrate her thesis that Montgomery's books ground their meaning and metaphorical layers on spirituality, and that, in general, "Ideologies are the rich palimpsest beneath the layers of meaning that make up story."*

"In childhood I had very deep religious instincts but I do not seem to possess them now," wrote Maud Montgomery in her journal on 13 December 1920 (*SJ* II 394). Her journals indeed tell a story of growing doubt and disillusionment, especially with the church and its demands on ministers, and even more personally for her, on ministers' wives. Yet I would argue it is in fact the strength of Montgomery's religious impulse — the ideology or system of beliefs which, in John Stephens' phrase, "makes sense of the world" (8) through a belief in the Christian (and in the early books at least, with some gentle humour, Presbyterian) God — that gives the texts their structural coherence. M.M. Bakhtin writes that to "study the word as such, ignoring the impulse that reaches out beyond it," is "senseless" (292); the impulse that reaches out beyond Montgomery's words has its origins in an intertext of Christian concerns and conceptions, (concerns and conceptions that have always at their very heart included grappling with issues of faith and doubt). This intertext is part of Mieke Bal's "deep structure" (11); what has been criticised as moral overtone is in fact

thematic undertone, part of the impulse reaching beyond, not just something superimposed. It inspires the poetics of setting, the actions of characters and the dynamics of narrative. Even what Elizabeth Rollins Epperly refers to as Anne's "consciously instructive" propensity in *Anne of Avonlea* and what she calls that text's "positively preachy" narratorial voice (51, 49) becomes more delicately ironic, read against and with "insider" understandings — firstly, of the religious precepts of duty and conscience that have been so much part of Anne's training and, secondly, of her susceptible teenage character, playing out the role of teacher.

As many have noted (see, for example, Reimer, 1; Ahmansson, 14; Rubio and Waterston, *SJ I* xiii) the appeal of these texts is ongoing and universal. This is particularly surprising in Australia, where popular books are becoming much more locally-specific and are reflecting increasingly contemporary preoccupations. *Anne of Green Gables* is set in a remote (to Australia, anyway!) rural world of over a century ago, where the method of transport is by sorrel mare (I'm still not sure what sort of a horse that is), where late turnip seed is sowed "on the hill field beyond the barn" (turnips have long since been replaced by an exotic array of Asian vegetables in multicultural Australia), and where all the children appear to go to Sunday School (also generally long since out of favour). The high points, or "epochs," of this narrative are concerned with such events as Anne's visiting a maiden lady in the town, or of her being invited out to tea at the home of the local minister, or of her pretending to be Tennyson's Elaine. I don't want to disillusion Canadian readers, but this is also pretty far removed from contemporary Australia. There are long and frequent references to such outdated creatures of fantasy as elves, fairies, dryads and wood nymphs. And, most surprising of all, there are the frequent and undisguised narratorial interjections of overtly moral and religious inculcation.

It is my belief that these texts continue to be not just acceptable but so popular that new editions are constantly being produced, because of the coherence of the underframing impulse which finds its most explicit voice, but not its only voice, in those narratorial interjections. The rich symbolism of what I call the core four Anne books (*Anne of Green Gables, Anne of Avonlea, Anne of the Island*, and *Anne's House of Dreams*) articulates an abundance of religious connotations and associations which prepares a subtle subliminal receptivity to the discourse as a whole, to its subject matter and to its themes.

There is not space here to explore the complex distinctions between the concepts of morality, religion and spirituality; religion, however, is inherently spiritual and is framed in moral law (Hart 220). David Tracy's words concerning theological and philosophical definitions of religion are worth noting:

> The most notable substantive definitions proposed have been Friedrich Schleiermacher's definition of religion as 'the feeling of absolute dependence,' Rudolf Otto's phenomenology of the holy as the mysterium fascinans et tremendum, Paul Tillick's analysis of religion as 'ultimate concern,' and Bernard Lonergan's definition of religious experience as 'being-in-love-in an-unrestricted fashion.' (92)

The different emphases of these definitions (critical, mystical, moral, emotional) are revealing. Lonergan's definition — "being-in-love-in-an-unrestricted-fashion" — is reflected in the extravagance and exuberance of Anne's responses to "everything, the garden and the brook and the woods, the whole big dear world" (*AGG* 32). Schleiermacher's definition is implicated in the words of Captain Jim, in the text written in the midst of the Great War —"back of it all, God is good" (*AHD* 111) — and, in the same text, in the words of Marilla, trying to comfort Anne after her baby's death — "We can't understand, but we must believe that it is all for the best" (*AHD* 119). Anne as she grows older become less exuberant and more attuned to Otto's mysterium fascinans et tremendum, but this has always been a part of her intuitive response. In her first year at Green Gables, we are told:

> When the violets came out in Violet Vale, Anne walked through it on her way to school with reverent steps and worshipping eyes, as if she trod on holy ground. (13)

Marilla and perhaps Avonlea, and certainly, as Miss Cornelia continually and sharply informs us, Glen St. Mary, respond to Tillick's moral notion of religion as "ultimate concern" but without the love which that notion presupposes. The oppositions and conflicts that occur when, in *Anne of Green Gables* in particular, orthodoxy is set against spirituality, truth against pretence, and law against love, constitute a significant part of thematic infrastructure; they also of course lie at the core of the Christian message. Marilla adopts Anne because her conscience tells her that she should; Anne's decision to remain at Green Gables with Marilla is prompted not so much by a sense of moral duty (although that is a part of it) as by love.

The religious imagery is so inherent, so much a part of the whole, that it is unobtrusive, and therefore the texts have become acceptable to a wide range of readers. The more comfortable signifier "spirituality" can be substituted for the potentially problematical term "religion," the overtly "religious bits" can be skimmed and glossed over. This does not matter in a sense, but it does disregard the implicit impulse reaching out beyond the words. Montgomery's great art as a storyteller grows out of her own conceptions of the world, and her own struggles become a part of that story. Her growing resentment towards the church is to change the flavour of some the later texts, but not of these core four (although there are differences). Nonetheless, it is important to note that the criticism of the structures of the church within the texts are criticisms that Christians are entirely familiar with and may often share. Such church structures are strongly encoded in the spatial dimension of *Anne's House of Dreams*; Miss Cornelia, as well as being a staunch advocate of her sex, is the church's pithiest critic:

> 'That building committee held twenty-seven meetings, and at the end of the twenty-seventh weren't no nearer having a church than when they begun — not so near, for a fact, for in one fit of hurrying things along they'd gone to work and tore the old church down, so there we were, without a church, and no place but the hall to worship in ... The Glen St. Mary church wouldn't have

> been built to this day ... if we women hadn't just started in and took charge ... Oh, women can't preach or be elders; but they can build churches and scare up the money for them.'
>
> 'The Methodists allow women to preach,' said Captain Jim ...
>
> 'I never said the Methodists hadn't common sense, Captain. What I say is, I doubt if they have much religion.' (*AHD* 95)

Miss Cornelia's criticisms — of ministers, of the hypocrisy of revivalists "especially anxious about the souls of the nice-looking girls, believe me!," of the elders, of men in particular and Methodists in general, are those of an insider, not an outsider. Another insider, the contemporary Christian mystic, Carlo Carretto, writes:

> Here is the mystery of the church of Christ, a true, impenetrable mystery. She has the power to give me holiness, yet she is made up, all the way through, of sinners — and what sinners! ...
>
> How baffling you are, oh Church, and yet how I love you!
>
> How you have made me suffer, and yet how much I owe you!
>
> I should like to see you destroyed, and yet I need your presence.
>
> You have given me so much scandal and yet you have made me understand sanctity.
>
> I have seen nothing in the world more devoted to obscurity, more compromised, more false, and I have touched nothing more pure, more generous, more beautiful. How often I have wanted to shut the doors of my soul in your face, and how often I have prayed to die in the safety of your arms. (1981)

Symbols, signs that, in the words of Thomas Merton, "release the power of imaginative communion" (25) provide unity within the texts themselves, and within the series. Non-figurative images are linked to figurative symbols which simultaneously inject the image with the power of that symbol, and creatively expand the symbol within the context of that image. Consider the description of Anne's first trip along the Avenue,

> ... a stretch of road four or five hundred yards long, completely arched over with huge wide-spreading apple trees. Overhead was one long canopy of snowy, fragrant bloom. Below the boughs the air was full of a purple twilight and far ahead a glimpse of painted sunset sky shone like a great rose window at the end of a cathedral aisle. (*AGG* 21)

This simile, with its overt reference to a cathedral, inserts a penumbra of other associations around the signifiers. It also splices a special significance into the descriptive words that follow: Anne lifts her face "rapturously," her hands are "clasped before her," her eyes see "visions," her soul wanders "afar, star-led." Not only that, but the words that have gone before are now re-read and similarly enlarged. The avenue of trees becomes in retrospect that cathedral aisle, the fragrance evokes a spiritual dimension, "canopy" acquires an added richness.

The "great rose window" introduces associations of stained glass, and prismatic colours; this association of colour reaches back into the "glimpse of painted sunset sky" and teases it out into a myriad of other colours. The word "painted" implies a creation; the question becomes "Who painted it?" The answer has already been implied: this is a scene that evokes a church, churches are places of worship, it is God the creator who is worshipped there. Even the word "great," simple in itself, becomes more than a marker of just size; "large" sits at the front but behind it are "significant," "beautiful" and not far behind these are those connotations of greatness that inspire "awe" and even "rapture." In this richly related context, the colour "purple" carries an extra weight of meaning also: purple, beloved of Montgomery, is a blend of all the richness of reds and blues, and is the colour most commonly associated with ecclesiastical robes.

The next image builds on and further deepens these associations, because the groundwork for response has already been laid.

> Below them was a pond, looking almost like a river so long and winding was it. A bridge spanned it midway, and from there to its lower end, where an amber-hued belt of sand-hills shut it in from the dark blue gulf beyond, the water was a glory of many shifting hues — the most spiritual shadings of crocus and rose and ethereal green, with other elusive tintings for which no name has ever been found. (22)

"Spiritual" is already loaded from the preceding image, and is foregrounded again by "glory"; "rose" refers back to the "great rose window," while "ethereal" further emphasises that these colours are "heavenly" shadings.

By the time Anne actually sees Green Gables for the first time, the symbolism has become explicit:

> She opened her eyes and looked about her. They were on the crest of a hill. The sun had set some time since, but the landscape was still clear in the mellow afterlight. To the west a dark church spire rose up against a marigold sky. Below was a little valley, and beyond a long, gently rising slope with snug homesteads scattered along it. From one to another the child's eyes darted, eager and wistful. At last they lingered on one away to the left, far back from the road, dimly white with blossoming trees in the twilight of the surrounding woods. Over it, in the stainless south-west sky, a great crystal-white star was shining like a lamp of guidance and promise. (24)

Anne is at a high point, a crest, both physically and emotionally, because she is coming home. The sun has set but the infilling of its light is captured in the "afterlight," an evocative term also used in that other symbolical "coming home" of the last chapter (255). The "church spire" both signifies and throws back to "cathedral"; the star is an allusion to the famous Christmas star that also led to the fulfilment of a dream. The sky is "stainless" — pure — as the "dimly white" trees are pure; the star is "great" as the rose window was "great": significant, beautiful, awe-inspiring.

Related images amplify the antiphony of symbolism in the sequels. They also contribute to the type of scaffolding which, in the words of Manakhem

Perry, creates "maximum relevancy among the various data of the text" (124) — that is, among the story and characters which give the text life. When Anne arrives in Glen St. Mary, the lighthouse beacon is described as "a trembling, quivering star of good hope" (*AHD* 27), harkening back to that other arrival fourteen years before, and accessing those earlier notions of "guidance and promise." But the light of this star is "quivering" and "trembling" as an indication of the winds of change that are making Anne's way less sure, and her faith, which has found its most overt expression in the preceding text, *Anne of the Island*, less confident.

However, *Anne of the Island* has marked the beginning of the change that is to become more obvious in *Anne's House of Dreams*; the "olden time" that was gently and nostalgically evoked in *Anne of Green Gables* has now, in 1915, become, with an incipience of sadness, an irretrievably lost paradise. "Everything is changing — or going to change," says Diana in the first chapter ("The Shadow of Change"). "I have a feeling that things will never be the same again, Anne" (9).

An overview of these four texts shows several related themes. There is an obvious motif of dreams versus realities, of "facts and fancies," of "poetry and prose," and these criss-cross and intersect with the metaphor of language, of reading and writing the world, a trope that Montgomery uses over and over again. Hart notes the "familiar metaphor that nature is God's book, ultimately totalised by divine consciousness" (24); the theological writings of Jacques Derrida extend this metaphor into that which, in fine, is totalised by a consciousness either human or divine (44). Montgomery extends the metaphor to include a book of life, and an author God:

> The page of girlhood had been turned, as by an unseen finger, and the page of womanhood was before her with all its charm and mystery, its pain and sadness. (*AoA* 252)

In *Anne of Green Gables*, Anne escapes into a fantasy world from a reality which is unloving; her world of the imagination is framed within mystical responses to the beauty of nature, responses which gradually become more "religious," more God-centred, as her physical world becomes more people-centred. Fascinated by words, naming and renaming her space as well as herself (or trying to), when she comes to Green Gables she uses the power of language, as cited in the Heideggerian formula "I am what I say," to make her dreams come true. Her dreams are all for the future, constructed (for the most part) on the presupposition of a possibility of realisation, and are encapsulated in her notion of "the bend in the road." The closure has Anne, and everyone else, in their rightful place because "God's in His heaven"; the underlying premise, symbolically represented in the beginning and then played on and built upon by story, is that God is Love, and that it is love, not law or orthodoxy or convention, which must become the initiating stimulus of any real God-centred "religious" behaviour.

In *Anne of Avonlea*, a much more episodic narrative, the motif of dreams is extended retrogressively, reaching backward into the past, rather than

forward into the future. A past dream is something very different; as an echo of what might have been, it may be a mocking reminder of what never was. Miss Lavendar lives in a world of echoes, of "dreams and make-believes" (183) and the nature of the echo is to die, as the poetic intertext makes clear:

> *Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying:*
> *Blow, bugle: answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.*

Anne of Avonlea is much looser in structure than the earlier text, but its unifying theme is that dream must be nurtured by "truth," not just the appearance of truth; artificial dreams only reveal emptiness. The text explores in a variety of ways (including the incident with Mr Harrison's jersey cow, his presentation of himself as a bachelor, Parker selling his vote, Uncle Abe's predictions, Davy's "whoppers," Paul's stories and Anne's poetic fancies) the relationship of appearances to truth, of truth to reality, and the significance and power of language in writing truth, and in reading truth correctly. The Avonlea Improvers discover that when an error is made in language the results may have to be lived with for a long time: a bright blue Hall is the result. Miss Lavendar is living with loneliness not only because of the words spoken in anger but also because of the conciliatory words which she did not speak. It is the enlargement of the notion of truth into a religious connotation that most relates this text to the implicit stimulus of the core four texts. The underlying religious premise of *Anne Of Avonlea* is that it may not be a perfect world, but that if it is read truthfully, there is a "mantle of charity" which can be written into every life and which can give each life a new beginning:

> It had snowed softly and thickly all through the hours of darkness and the beautiful whiteness, glittering in the frosty sunshine, looked like a mantle of charity cast over the mistakes and humiliations of the past.
>
> *Every morn is a fresh beginning*
> *Every morn is the world made new,*
>
> sang Anne, as she dressed. (93)

Here, Montgomery uses "charity" in the biblical sense as another signifier for Love (King James Version), a love which at its essence presents an ineffable truth. Implicitly, God is the truth that underlies all reality, that enables the new beginnings, and in *Anne of Avonlea* His truth is love.

In *Anne's House of Dreams*, the setting of the title overtly points to the realisation of all Anne's deepest desires, but ironically it is in this text that Anne must learn that dreams don't always come true; it is a wavering faith in "the goodness of God" that she must cling to as the world crowds in with realities that are so harsh that they leave no space for dreams — "I can't dream now, Captain Jim. I'm done with dreams," she says (121). With the exception of Leslie's new life after Dick's operation, and of course the birth of Little Jem, there are few new beginnings in this text. It is in fact pervaded by a leit-motif of loss: Marilla, her face looking "very gray and old" (27) loses Anne, Captain Jim has lost Margaret, Anne loses Joy, Leslie has lost everyone; ultimately Anne loses

the House of Dreams itself. Anne enters a hurting world when she travels the sixty miles of her wedding trip from Avonlea to Four Winds Harbour. The religious impulse now becomes less sure, and immanent rather than transcendent. At Green Gables, Anne's quest has been outward-looking, towards a place where God is in His heaven; in *Anne's House of Dreams* the journey is more inward: she (like the Montgomery revealed in the journals) must explore the depths of her own soul as she confronts both her own suffering and that of others. As Anne awaits her baby's birth in a pastel and fragrant spring world, birth and death images, "the spring-moan of the sea," "the bell of the church across the harbour" which contains the graveyard where Joy is to lie, become part of a symbolical representation of the realities of death-in-life, of death as a part of life, even in spring, even in the beginning of things. It is only through faith, through a desperate belief that, as Captain Jim says, "back of it all, God is good" (111), that Anne, and Montgomery herself, can hold on to the hope that the evil of a world gone mad (the text was written in 1917, during the Great War) is, again in Captain Jim's words, "going to get the worst of it in the long run" (113). "Though I doubted God last Sunday I do not doubt him today," wrote Montgomery in her journal on 31 March, 1918 (*SJ* II 245).

Anne of the Island, however, is the text in which Montgomery most overtly declares her theological beliefs. Again, she uses the metaphor of language to encode and draw all her themes into a religious framework; it becomes the matrix for these relationships. She continues to use the reading metaphors of the preceding texts to express Anne's eventual realisation of the truth, and to integrate her themes and reflections on life. The *Bible* is a strongly embedded intertext, entwined with both Keats and Tennyson at the end of the first chapter to make what is probably the clearest statement of thematic intent in the book. Anne is richer in "dreams than in realities," says Montgomery, because "things seen pass away, but the things that are unseen are eternal" (14). Her usage of the word "dreams" in this way dramatically extends its semantics: the continuing motif of dreams and realities is given a religious interface. "Dreams" are now a contrast to transience, they are permanent rather than ephemeral; it is the very intangibility, or more precisely the invisibility, of the dream, which gives it its power, and its truth. The biblical intertext is strongly encoded:

> We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak;
>
> Knowing that He which raised the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.
>
> For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.
>
> For which cause we faint not; but though the outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.
>
> For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;
>
> While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not

> seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:13-18, King James Version)

This passage plays down the significance of the "outward man" and concentrates on the "inward man" who "believes" and "speaks out" his faith. There is a play here between the truth of words and the truth of the Word. In the last chapter, the lovers are "believing" and "speaking out" their faith in the future. After she and Gilbert declare their love for each other, Anne says, "Oh, dreams will be very sweet now" (221); in other words, her dreams for the future are now based on a reality of love. This makes "time" unimportant — "As for the waiting, that doesn't matter" (220): "for our light affliction, which is but for a moment ...," says St. Paul. The closing of each of the books presents a re-figuring of time; in *Anne of the Island*, the lovers are

> king and queen together in the bridal realm of love, along winding paths fringed with the sweetest flowers that ever bloomed, and over haunted meadows where winds of hope and memory blew. (221)

They are the archetypal lovers — every lover who has ever loved, lifted out of "real" time into a dimension of eternal time, which is both past — "haunted," "memory" — the present, and the future — "winds of hope." It is an example of what Paul Ricoeur calls "internal time, pulled back by memory and thrust ahead by expectation" (105); it also evokes what he refers to as

> the relationship of time to eternity.... Fictional narrative thus detects temporalities that are more or less extended, offering in each instance a different figure of recollection, of eternity in and out of time, and, I will add, of the secret relation between eternity and death. (101)

It is of course fear of Gilbert's death that causes Anne to read her "book of revelation" and the macrocontext becomes a landscape of metaphor as it echoes the storm that rages within her; it is "no accident that Montgomery uses a storm to fill the hours of Anne's agonised vigil," writes Epperly (67). Again there is a strong biblical intertext: Isaiah writes, "The spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me ... to bind up the broken-hearted ... to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning" (Isaiah 61:1,3). Pacifique gives Anne the "oil of joy for mourning" (216)."Beauty for Ashes" is of course to become a chapter heading in *Anne's House of Dreams:*

> Long after Pacifique's gay whistle had faded into the phantom of music and then into silence far up under the maples of Lovers' Lane, Anne stood under the willows, tasting the poignant sweetness of life when some great dread has been removed from it. This morning was a cup filled with mist and glamour. In the corner near her was a rich surprise of new-blown, crystal-hued roses. The trills and trickles of song from the birds in the big tree above her seemed in perfect accord with her mood. A sentence from a very old, very old, very true, very wonderful Book came to her lips: "Weeping may endure for a night but joy cometh in the morning." (216)

This line from Psalm 30, verse 5, again foregrounds the suspension of normal time which has been noted in the closure ("which is but for the moment"). Anne's spirit communes with the silence — on an earlier occasion she says, "The silence here is like a prayer, isn't it?" (27) — and with the morning. The "cup" of morning semantically enlarges in this context to a communion cup, a chalice. Montgomery is to use this image again in the following text: when Anne arrives in Glen St Mary the sky is "like a jewelled cup" (*AHD* 24). The roses are new-blown — this is another beginning and it is joy that has come. Anne is at one with her world in just the same way as she was at the end of *Anne of Green Gables*: the song of the birds is "in perfect accord with her mood" and the Psalmist's words are a reiteration of the "alrightness" of "God's in His heaven." Gilbert will live. Nonetheless, she must wait for his words to tell her the truth of his feeling for her; she must wait for him to "speak."

It is, however, death that comes to Ruby, Anne's schoolgirl friend, and *Anne of the Island* deals with the eschatological issues of death and life-after-death very explicitly. Graveyards provide a visual link between the two "worlds" of life and death. They establish meanings and relationships which are thematically significant, and which are repeated in this text and the later one. *Anne of Green Gables* ends in a journey from the Avonlea graveyard back to Green Gables, a tryst with death turned into a tryst with life.

The graveyard in Kingsport is a long way from Avonlea, but it serves to introduce the idea of endings, and of death touching the very young; the middy was only eighteen when he died (36). It also introduces the idea of "death in action," a term which was assuming a dreadful significance at the time of the publication of this text, and which presages Anne's own tragedy when Walter is killed at Courcelette (*RI* 219). However, although Anne is touched by the middy's story, and leaves her corsage of pansies on his grave, the graveyard itself is a romantic place, its tragedies distanced by time. The girls chatter light-heartedly about Phil's boyfriends, in much the same way that Ruby talks about her "fellows" (99). They wander happily around "reading the quaint, voluminous epitaphs" (29), another example of language and reading.

The graveyard at Old St. John's serves to bring death into life as a preparation for the life fading into death which confronts Anne when she returns to Avonlea. As she sits with the dying Ruby, the Avonlea graveyard has a very different appearance to the graveyard at Old St. John's. Ruby shivers and reads it as "strange" and "ghostly"; it represents the antithesis of "life" and what she'd "been used to." Anne has to formulate quickly words of comfort and hope, but also words of truth — "she could not tell comforting falsehoods" (101). There is a re-statement of the earlier text:

> [Ruby] had lived solely for the little things of life — the things that pass — forgetting the great things that go onward into eternity, bridging the gulf between the two lives and making of death a mere passing from one dwelling to the other — from twilight to unclouded day. (101)

Here again is the implication that the "dream" of heaven has a greater reality than the present earthly life which is like a "twilight" compared to the

light of eternity. Here again also is the concept of an infinity of time: heaven is free from the suspense of the temporal dimension and will be an "unclouded day" instead of a fleeting moment between light and dark.

Whereas the religious concepts are encoded more symbolically in the earlier texts, in *Anne of the Island* they become explicit, with frequent commentaries on life, love, peace, God, Satan, and conscience: "the life of heaven must be begun here on earth" (103), "It's [conscience] something in you, Davy, that always tells you when you are doing wrong and makes you unhappy if you persist in doing it" (97), and to Gilbert in the park, "Do you remember what Dr. Davis said last Sunday evening — that the sorrows God sent us brought comfort and strength with them, while the sorrows we brought on ourselves were by far the hardest to bear?" (158). It was surprising to read therefore Gavin White's statement that "there is very little religion in her books," although he does conclude by noting that her religious faith

> was a major influence on her writings, and would have made those writings more acceptable to her original readers, even if modern readers are unaware of this factor. (84)

Despite her own growing doubts, Montgomery has encoded the *Anne* books, or at least the core four of these, on the fundamental tenet of the religious philosophers, that God is the ground of all meaning. In *Anne of Green Gables*, God is love, in *Anne of Avonlea* God is truth, in *Anne of the Island*, God is the eternal reality, in *Anne's House of Dreams* God is a goodness that can only be sought through faith.

Ideologies are the rich palimpsest beneath the layers of language that make up story; they give the story its texture and are the material of its cohesion. L.M. Montgomery's innate conception of the world is God-created and God-oriented, and it is upon this premise that the *Anne* series has been encoded. Readers do not have to agree with her view, and as White points out may not even be aware of it, but it should be critically acknowledged; not to recognise it is to deny the truth of the "impulse that reaches out beyond."

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