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Passionate Blood, Puritan Conscience: An Intertextual Study of the Private and Public Works of L.M. Montgomery

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Abstract

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Mary-Margaret Klempa

The publication of *The Selected Journals of L.M. Montgomery,* the first volume of which appeared in 1985, has inspired a surge of critical interest in the life and works of L.M. Montgomery. Although one of the most interesting areas of study resulting from the publication of the journals is the relationship between Montgomery's journals and her fiction, little has been actually written on this subject.

Realizing that her journals might be published after her death, Montgomery herself prepared them for publication. She recopied and revised her journals and gave directives to her descendants regarding their eventual publication. The journals, therefore, cannot be studied only within the genre of the private diary. The literary value of Montgomery's journals must also be considered.

During the 1920s, L.M. Montgomery wrote a trilogy dealing with a young orphan named Emily. These three novels are considered by Montgomery and her critics to be the most autobiographical of Montgomery's fiction. Because of the autobiographical nature of these novels, it is important to study them side by side with Montgomery's journals.

This thesis examines the relationship between Montgomery's journals and the *Emily* trilogy as well as the relationship between the *Emily* trilogy and *The Blue Castle*, a novel written between *Emily Climbs* and *Emily's Quest*. In this way, Montgomery's conflicting identities, as revealed in her private and public work, are examined.

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I thank my parents, Lois and William Klempa, for their endless support and encouragement while writing my thesis.

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Introduction

In 1985 the first volume of *The Selected Journals of L.M. Montgomery* was published by Oxford University Press. The editors, Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston, had been poring over the journals for years. Two grant applications had been turned down because Montgomery was not considered worthy of scholarly attention. In 1984, funding was finally provided, and one year later the world had access to the private life of the hugely popular author of *Anne of Green Gables*. The second volume of *The Selected Journals* appeared in 1987 and the third volume in 1992.

With the publication of her journals, L.M. Montgomery, once dismissed as a popular writer for children, quickly became a legitimate subject for academic study. In the past decade there have been numerous critical papers, theses, and several full-length studies of Montgomery's work. Despite this wave of scholarly interest there have been few studies of the relationship between L.M. Montgomery's *Journals* and her fictional works.

The publication of Montgomery's journals coincided with a surge of interest in women's autobiography. In particular, the diaries of literary women have increasingly become the subject of critical study. One of the fascinating subjects arising from this interest is the relationship between personal diaries and texts produced for publication. The different versions of experience provided by these private and public writings afford new insight into the conflicted lives of many women writers. In the Victorian period in particular, women's novels were expected to reflect traditional female values. The diaries of these women often explore a darker reality than what is portrayed in their novels.

According to Judy Simons, the most interesting perspective in studying the journal of a published writer is the relationship between the private and public writing.

> The differences in subject matter and in tone between private and public writings are particularly noticeable in the texts produced by 19th century women, and suggest the existence of tensions between these versions of their experience.[1]

For L.M. Montgomery, this is of particular interest. Her journals offer a rich site of critical investigation. From 1889 until her death in 1942, Montgomery wrote faithfully in her journal. She documented day to day events and childhood reminiscences. She recorded the joys and miseries that came to her as a result of marriage, motherhood, and her active career as a world-renowned writer. Montgomery's journals reveal a darker side to the woman who earned fame and fortune writing romantic novels with "happily ever after" endings. Her journal provided her with an outlet not offered by her professional writing.

The stark contrast between the journals and fiction reveals a conflict of identities of which Montgomery was well aware. She accounted for this conflict by referring to her "passionate Montgomery blood and [her] Puritan MacNeill conscience." (Apr. 8, 1898)[2] It may seem that the journals reflect the "passionate Montgomery blood," while the fiction reflects the "Puritan MacNeill conscience." However, such neat divisions cannot be made. Montgomery's passion, or unconventionalism, is often revealed in her fiction,

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[1] Judy Simons, *Diaries and Journals of Literary Women from Fanny Burney to Virginia Woolf* (London: MacMillan, 1990) 202.

[2] L.M. Montgomery. *The Selected Journals of L.M. Montgomery*, v.1: 1889-1910, ed. Mary Rubio & Elizabeth Waterston (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1985) 213. Hereafter, all references made to the *Selected Journals* v.1, will be made parenthetically, within the text, as *SJ* I.

particularly in the *Emily* trilogy. Likewise, her puritanism, or conventionalism, is exposed in her journals.

After the publication and huge success of *Anne of Green Gables* in 1907, Montgomery became increasingly aware of the literary value of her journal. In 1919, she began to recopy her journals into a set of uniform volumes and gave directives to her descendants regarding their eventual publication. The transcription of her journals involved a great degree of editing and revision that often resulted in a highly structured text. The *Journals* must therefore be studied as a literary text, as well as within the genre of the private diary.

L.M. Montgomery's literary activity in the 1920s involved the writing of a trilogy that centred on a character named Emily, as well as the publication of her first "adult novel", *The Blue Castle*. The *Emily* trilogy is widely considered Montgomery's most autobiographical work of fiction. It tells the story of a young female writer growing up in a small Prince Edward Island community at the turn of the century. Montgomery recorded Emily's trials and tribulations as an artist who must deal with the conflicting demands of her artistic growth and the social and gender expectations of her time. The trilogy is one of the early portraits of the female artist in conflict with her society. *The Blue Castle*, Montgomery's first "adult novel," is the story of an unmarried woman who has been oppressed and silenced by both her family members and the gender conventions of her time. In an act of rebellion, the heroine flouts the expectations of her family and society. Like the *Emily* trilogy, it is the story of a woman at odds with her society.

What follows is an inter-textual study of L.M. Montgomery's *Journals*, the *Emily*

trilogy and *The Blue Castle*. Because of the autobiographical nature of the *Emily* trilogy, it is important to study these works side by side. It is significant that while Montgomery was dreaming up the character of Emily, she was in the midst of recopying her journals. The scholar will find, in studying the *Journals* alongside the *Emily* series, that Montgomery transcribed whole passages from her journals into the novels. To a great degree, Montgomery gave to Emily her own childhood and inner life. Because Montgomery had a habit of referring back to her journals on a regular basis, and because she began to recopy her journals in 1919, all three volumes of the journals are highly relevant to the *Emily* series and *The Blue Castle.*

The first chapter concentrates on the three volumes of the *Selected Journals,* which cover the years 1889 to 1929. This involves an examination of Montgomery's method of writing the self. The *Journals* are a fascinating mixture of reflection, introspection and a narrative of daily events. Montgomery used her journal to release the pent- up frustrations and emotions that she felt she had to keep hidden from her family and public. The therapeutic purpose of Montgomery's journal, as well as her awareness of her future audience, are examined. What emerges from the journals is a portrait of a female artist with deeply conflicting identities. A strong, independent woman who admired the lives of pioneering women and who rejected many gender stereotypes in her own work, Montgomery was unable to escape the Victorian view of ideal womanhood. The *Journals* reveal the divided self of L.M. Montgomery: her public and private faces.

The second chapter examines the first book in the *Emily* series, *Emily of New Moon*, and the journal entries that correspond to the time that Montgomery was writing this

novel. Because of the retrospective nature of both her journals and *Emily of New Moon*, the first two journals are also considered. I discuss Montgomery's talent for faithfully depicting childhood experience and I consider Montgomery's psychological motivation in returning to her own past. Montgomery was a woman who increasingly looked to her past, and especially her childhood, as a means of escape from the unhappiness and difficulties of her present life. I also examine how she used children to express controversial and unconventional opinions that would have been considered unacceptable if voiced by a woman. Finally, I explore Montgomery's version of the female *kunstlerroman*. I look at the issues that she felt were pivotal in the life of a female artist, and the ways in which her protagonist deals with the gender and social expectations of her time.

In the third chapter I look at the second book of the trilogy, *Emily Climbs*, and consider the difficulties that Montgomery faced in writing about adolescence. I discuss how Montgomery surrendered to the demands of the public and still managed to write an interesting novel of a teenage girl exploring her artistic self. The conflicts of art and romance are considered. I also examine the method of narration which involves a third-person narrator combined with entries from "Emily's" diary. It is interesting to note that Montgomery's own "journalizing" was put to good use in *Emily Climbs*.

The final chapter examines *The Blue Castle* and the last book of the *Emily* series, *Emily's Quest*. Montgomery wrote *The Blue Castle* between *Emily Climbs* and *Emily's Quest*. I explore Montgomery's reasons for putting off the writing of the final *Emily* book, and investigate the relationship between *The Blue Castle* and the *Emily* trilogy.

Montgomery's joy in writing *The Blue Castle* and her corresponding difficulty and frustration with *Emily's Quest* are also examined.

Judy Simons poses the following questions for consideration with respect to the diaries of women writers.

> Can a study of writers' diaries inform our reading of their published work in terms of revealing their sources of inspiration, their working methods, the market forces which determined their subjects and other pressures on them to produce?...How far do private journals act as working notebooks, providing a constant source of reference for writers who revise the substance of daily life to produce a more polished rendering?[3]

These questions are certainly germane to the study of L.M. Montgomery's journals, and I believe that a consideration of these questions will prove interesting. Throughout the thesis I consider the events of Montgomery's personal and public life and their influence on the work of this period. It is my intention, through the intertextual study of her *Journals* and her fictional work during the period of 1921-1929, to come to a fuller appreciation of L.M. Montgomery. It is my hope that the study of L.M. Montgomery's *Journals* will provide an interpretive tool towards understanding the imaginative mind of the artist and her works.

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[3] Simons, 202.

Chapter 1

Constructing the Self: The Journals of L.M. Montgomery

On September 21, 1889, at the age of fourteen, L.M. Montgomery wrote in her journal, "I am going to begin a new kind of diary." (*SJ* I 1) She was probably unaware, as she penned these words, that she was embarking on the most ambitious project of her literary career. Montgomery's journal was to become a life document. She wrote in it faithfully all her life until serious illness and depression prevented her from doing so.

In the course of her life, Montgomery wrote prolifically. Apart from the regular writing in her journal, she also wrote short stories, poetry, and the many novels that became world famous and loved by people of all ages and nationalities. Encouraged at the young age of sixteen by the publication of a poem, Montgomery laboured at her chosen profession and earned success and fame that went beyond her wildest expectations. Over half a century later, Montgomery's work is even more popular than it was in her own day. Her novels and stories continue to capture the hearts and imaginations of young and old, male and female. The recent publication of her journals has renewed interest in Montgomery and has stimulated a wave of critical interest in her work.

Montgomery's journal served many purposes. However, it was not merely a spontaneous and candid record of her daily life. It was, rather, as Margaret Turner notes, "a specific literary act."[4] However, it was a literary act that was distinct from her other

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[4] Margaret Turner, "'I mean to try, as far as in me lies, to paint my life and deeds truthfully': autobiographical process in the L.M. Montgomery Journals," *Harvesting Thistles: the Textual Garden of L.M. Montgomery*, ed. Mary Henley Rubio (Guelph:

literary production. It served as a form of expression that was not satisfied by her creative writing. Montgomery grew up in the small Prince Edward Island community of Cavendish where she had limited opportunities for intellectual development or companionship. The centre of intellectual activity in her community was the Cavendish Hall, which housed a small library and literary society. As a teenager, Montgomery could discuss literature and intellectual matters with her school-mates. As she grew older, this intellectual outlet was cut off from her when her male school-mates became suitors, went off to college or married[5]. Her journal, then, provided her with an intellectual outlet that was not available to her in Cavendish.

When L.M. Montgomery was just two years old, her mother died of tuberculosis. Her father moved out west and left his small daughter to be raised by her aging grandparents whose own children were grown and married. She lived with her grandparents, and after her grandfather died, her grandmother, until the age of thirty-five. They had little patience or sympathy for the energetic and sensitive girl in their charge. Moreover, as they grew older they became more set in their ways and increasingly unsympathetic to the younger generation. Montgomery would later describe her childhood

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Canadian Children's Press, 1994) 94.

[5] From the evidence of Montgomery's journals, it seems that she reserved serious intellectual discussion for her male schoolmates. With her female schoolmates she tended to discuss more trivial matters. The record of her female friendships in her journals seems to be of a more carefree nature. Her female friendships became more important and profound in her later life when she developed more meaningful relationships with women.

as emotionally starved and her upbringing as overly strict.[6] She felt stifled living under the sharp and critical eyes of her grandparents. Her journal was a space where she could relieve her feelings of frustration and discontent. It was a private space where she could escape from the repressive experience of her home life.

Her journal also offered Montgomery an opportunity to practice her craft. It served as a practice-ground for her professional writing. She could take poetic flights of fancy; she could develop an interesting and vivid story from a seemingly commonplace incident; she could exercise her narrative and descriptive skills; she could explore her feelings and ideas; she could do all of this without fear of censorship or criticism.

Yet the journals of L.M. Montgomery seem to be written by a different person than the gifted storyteller who captured the hearts of her public with *Anne of Green Gables*. On the surface at least, Montgomery's fiction depicts an idealized world, where good triumphs over evil, and happiness prevails. Her journal, on the other hand, reveals a woman who was largely dissatisfied with her life: a sharp-tongued, often bitter woman whose cynicism seemed to belie the sunny optimism found in her novels. In their biography of Montgomery, Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston (the editors of Montgomery's journals), comment on the contradictory personalities of Montgomery:

> The face she presents in the journals is barely recognizable to people who knew her in real life, or to those who formed an image of her as the author of those beloved fictions...Many who knew her - including relatives who knew her well -have been astonished by the journals: these private

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[6] Montgomery first mentioned the harsh conditions of her childhood on January 5, 1905. "The older I grow the more I realize what a starved childhood mine was *emotionally*. I was brought up by two old people, neither of whom at their best were ever very sympathetic and who had already grown into set, intolerant ways." (*SJ* I, 300)

> writings simply did not reflect the woman they knew. Even her son Stuart, who had been extremely close to her in her final years, was surprised, after her death, by the mother he encountered in the journals.[7]

How can these two opposing representations of Montgomery be reconciled? What relationship can be traced between Montgomery's private writing and her writing intended for publication? In Montgomery's case, the distinction between the private diary and the public fiction is not as straightforward as it might seem. After the enormous success of her first novel, *Anne of Green Gables*, Montgomery became increasingly aware of the literary value of her journal. "By 1910 she knew that she was constructing a culturally important and psychologically rich 'record', a life document."[8] In 1919 she began to recopy her journals into uniformly sized volumes.

> My journal, beginning in the fall of 1890, has been written in various 'blank books' of equally various shapes and sizes. I resolved to copy it...It will mean a great deal of work and will take a long time, for I can only spare fifteen minutes a day for it. But it will be a satisfaction when done. I shall be careful to copy it exactly as it is written but I mean to 'illustrate' it as I go along with such photos of the scenes and people who figure in it as I possess. (Sept.2, 1919) [9]

Although she meant to "copy it exactly as it is written," she could not resist the temptation to edit and shape it as she went along. Rubio and Waterston note that pages

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[7] Mary Rubio & Elizabeth Waterston, *Writing a life: L.M. Montgomery* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1995) 118.

[8] Mary Rubio & Elizabeth Waterston, "Introduction." *The Selected Journals of L.M. Montgomery V.II: 1910-1921* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987) xi.

[9] L.M. Montgomery, *The Selected Journals of L.M. Montgomery* v.II: 1910-1921, ed. Mary Rubio & Elizabeth Waterston (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987) 341. Hereafter, all references made to the *Selected Journals* v.II will be made parenthetically, within the text, as *SJ* II.

had been razored out of the original manuscript, some passages were heavily inked over, and other passages had been erased and rewritten. Apart from the obvious cutting that Montgomery did, Rubio and Waterston speculate that while copying her journals, Montgomery may have been tempted to censor and refine the original content. Carole Gerson further speculates that Montgomery may have retrospectively added to her journal during the editing process.

> In view of her later preparation of these personal writings for public view, with ample opportunity to adjust her wording while she recopied the text and added numerous photographs, it is more than likely that this professional story-teller shaped her own story retrospectively, along specific narrative lines.[10]

Rebecca Hogan's assessment of diaries as "fragmentary, constructed by associative rather than logical connections, ...lacking a sense of the architechtronics of shape or plot,"[11] does not apply to Montgomery's journals. The reader will find within the journals character and plot development, narrative flow and continuity, foreshadowing, literary convention and symbolism. Montgomery always read the previous entry of her journal before beginning the next, thereby leaving no strings untied. It is clear, then, that Montgomery's efforts to refine her art of diary-writing often result in a highly structured text. Judy Simons comments on the structure of women's diaries.

Diaries and journals, so often relegated to the margins of the literary

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[10] Carole Gerson, "'Dragged at Anne's Chariot Wheels': L.M. Montgomery and the Sequels to *Anne of Green Gables*," *Papers of the Bibliographic Society of Canada* 35 (1997): 150.

[11] Rebecca Hogan, "Engendered autobiographies: the diary as a feminine form," in *Autobiography and questions of gender*, ed. Shirley Neuman (London: F. Cass, 1992) 95.

> academy, are nonetheless exacting literary projects, of great significance to their subjects...The sequential organisation of the diary provides the basis for its plot in the connection between daily entries. Writers often re-read previous entries before starting to write the next, aware of the structural relationships they create.[12]

Because of their careful structure and plotting, the job of editing the journals presented great difficulties to Rubio and Waterston.

> To think of condensing the diaries was a daunting prospect, for Montgomery had written them in a narrative style which did not lend itself to condensation. She repeated motifs in ways which showed her sophisticated grasp of the oral storyteller's art; she gave seemingly inconsequential lead-ins to entries to provide atmosphere for the narrative which followed; and like the murder-mystery writer, she cunningly implanted all the advance evidence which allowed the reader to understand people and events which entered the narrative later on. Her diaries, carefully copied into large financial ledgers after she had become world famous, with pictures pasted in to give a visual dimension to the text, were almost seamless in their art.[13]

In recent years, the genre of autobiography has become a subject of scholarly interest. In particular, the journals of literary women are receiving considerable critical attention. These studies have legitimatized diaries and journals as a genre worthy of scholarly investigation. The diaries of literary women often provide a glimpse into the conflicted lives that these women led: the private life of the traditional female role and the public life of the writer. In the late Victorian era, in which Montgomery began her professional writing career, the novels of women were expected to reflect the feminine

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[12] Judy Simons, *Diaries and Journals of Literary Women from Fanny Burney to Virginia Woolf* (London: MacMillan) 201.

[13] Mary Rubio, "'A dusting off': an anecdotal account of editing the L.M. Montgomery Journals," *Working women's archives: researching women's private literature and archival documents*, ed Helen M. Buss and Marlene Kadar (North York: York University, 1995) 31.

values of the time. The journals of women writing at this time often provide a powerful counter-narrative to the fiction that they produced.[14]

It would be tempting to dichotomize the public and private writing of Montgomery, to identify Montgomery's private self with her journals, and her public self with her fiction. It could then be concluded that the journals reveal the "true" Montgomery, while the fiction is only a manifestation of the public mask that she wore to conform to Victorian ideals of womanhood. However, such distinctions cannot be so easily assumed. Montgomery's novels are not purely conventional. While she often succumbed to conventional endings, Montgomery's stories were often quite unconventional for their time. She did not portray the institution of marriage in a very favourable light. She espoused the further education of women. She valued women's work both in the home and in the world. Montgomery's fiction abounds with depictions of strong, independent women, some of whom (Miss Cornelia, for example, in *Anne's House of Dreams*) voice decidedly feminist views.

Montgomery's diary was not a completely private space where she could freely pour out her most intimate thoughts and feelings. It is clear that Montgomery had a sense of audience even in the early years of her journal. Although she declared on the very first

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[14] This point is stressed in many studies that deal with the journals of literary women. Judy Simons, in *Diaries and Journals of Literary Women*, writes "For many 18th and 19th century women, their personal journals became indirect means of resistance to codes of behaviour with which they were uncomfortable, allowing for a release of feelings which had no other vent." (4) She further says, "Diaries could not only absorb the attention but could also extend the boundaries of female creativity, giving their authors a license for uncensored expression that was prohibited elsewhere." (18) Helen Buss, in *Mapping Our Selves*, writes "The diary offers creative women an outlet not offered by public genres.

page of her journal, "I am going to keep this book locked up!" (*SJ* I:1; Sept. 21, 1889), she did not feel free to confide everything to her diary. On January 20, 1890, Montgomery wrote, "Mollie and I have made a decidedly startling discovery about some of our personal affairs. I am not going to write it down because it is a dead secret." (*SJ* I: 13) She was already cautiously selective about the contents of her diary. During her visit to her father in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Montgomery related her fear that her step-mother might read her diary. "I am constantly afraid that she will sometime find and read this journal although I keep it locked up." (*SJ* I, 33; Oct. 6, 1890) If Montgomery's fear of having her journal read by eyes other than her own kept her from being completely frank in these early years, in later years, when she knew that her journals would survive her and she began to prepare them for publication, her self-censorship must have become far more cautious. Apart from the physical evidence of the editing of her journal, Montgomery must have carefully chosen the words which would compose the story of her life.

Lynn Z. Bloom examines the public nature of supposedly private diaries in her essay "'I Write for Myself and Strangers.'" She questions the assumption that private diaries are written exclusively for private consumption. In fact, she argues that "for a professional writer there are no private writings."[15]

> The writer's mind is invariably alert to the concerns of an audience and shapes the text, even letters and diaries, to accommodate these. The private performance may be less polished than the manuscript destined for

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[15] Lynn Z. Bloom, "'I Write for Myself and Strangers': Private Diaries as Public Documents," *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women's Diaries*, ed. Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia A. Huff (Amherst: U. of Massachussetts Pr., 1996) 25.

> publication from the outset, but once a writer, like an actor, is audience-oriented, such considerations as telling a good story, getting the sounds and the rhythm right, supplying sufficient detail for another's understanding, can never be excluded. All writers know this; they attend to such matters through design and habit. A professional writer is never off-duty.[16]

This is certainly true in Montgomery's case. As Montgomery began to earn success in her professional writing career, she increasingly drew her identity from her writing. At the same time, the private writing of her journal began to undergo a transformation. While the early entries of her journal are certainly not artless, they depict a light-hearted, highly social girl to whom life seemed to be a series of jests and amusing adventures. Her writing, while excellent for a girl of her age, reflected her still immature character. The entries show her experimenting with different writing styles and different identities. In these early years of her journal, the reader does not see very deeply into her psyche. Montgomery was still searching for a voice. In a review of the first published volume of Montgomery's journals, Janice Kulyk Keefer wrote,

> A few pages into Volume I of *The Selected Journals of L.M. Montgomery*, I found myself violently out of patience with its ebullient author, and wondering why her record of adolescent enthusiasms and frustrations should be so painstakingly recorded for posterity. By the end of the volume, I'd developed both admiration and liking for the woman revealed therein, a woman with none of the prim and prosy respectability which makes the grown-up Anne such a betrayal of her endearingly subversive younger self.[17]

A transformation, then, does indeed take place. However, Keefer seems to ignore what

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[16] Bloom, 25-6.

[17] Janice Kulyk Keefer, "The Selected Journals of L.M. Montgomery Vols. I-II," *Antigonish Review* no. 73 (1988): 83.

I consider to be a conscious transformation. Keefer develops admiration for the woman "revealed" in the journal. I would argue, however, that the woman is artfully constructed rather than artlessly revealed.

It is apparent from numerous references in the journals that Montgomery constantly reread her diary. Apart from reading the previous entry to maintain continuity in the following entries, Montgomery reread great chunks of her diary at regular intervals. In rereading, Montgomery was inevitably confronted with characterizations of her former self. She was her own audience, no doubt often a critical audience. An interesting clue to her possible reaction upon rereading her journal is given when Montgomery wrote of her habit of underlining passages in books.

> I've always had the habit of marking my books. I do it now with a pencil. I was not so wise in my teens and used ink. Consequently, I cannot now erase the marks of passages and opinions I no longer agree with, and they stare me in the face as reminders of my sentimental 'salad' days. (*SJ* I: 303; Feb. 8, 1905)

Montgomery could certainly not erase all of the "reminders of [her] sentimental 'salad' days" recorded in her journal. However, she could effect a transformation of that self. This transformation took place around the same time that Montgomery was beginning to win success in her literary career.

In 1897, when Montgomery was twenty-three years old, she became engaged to Edwin Simpson. Simpson was a third cousin of Montgomery's and was training for the Baptist ministry. Shortly after the engagement, Montgomery found herself violently unhappy with the situation. A few months later, still miserably engaged to Simpson, she went to the community of Bedeque to take charge of the school there. She boarded with

a family with whose son, Herman Leard, she developed an intense love relationship. The entries in Montgomery's journal undergo a radical change in content and style during this time. Whereas the previous entries have been chatty and newsy and relatively short, the most obvious change during and after these events is the length of the entries. The entry describing her misery over her engagement to Edwin Simpson comprises eight typewritten pages of the *Selected Journals* (June 30, 1897). The entry relating the Herman Leard affair makes up twenty typewritten pages (April 8, 1898). The sheer length of these entries raises intriguing questions about Montgomery's writing process. Is it possible that Montgomery spontaneously wrote these entries at one sitting, or did she transcribe from notes that she may have taken over the long period of time in which she was not writing?[18] The latter possibility must be the case as Montgomery was writing in great detail about events months after they had taken place. If she was not utilizing some form of note-taking system in the preparation for these entries, then her recall of events must have been incredible. She narrated her story with specific dates and trivial details of days from at least four months before.

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[18] There is evidence that Montgomery did use notes to write her journal entries. After marrying Ewan MacDonald, she referred to notes taken to reconstruct their experiences in Great Britain. She also refers to notes in V.3 of the *Selected Journals*. It is reasonable to assume, then, that she often wrote her journal entries with the help of notes written beforehand. Mary Rubio supports this conclusion. In her anecdotal essay about the editing of Montgomery's journals, "A Dusting Off," Rubio writes "I knew Montgomery's composition process - jotting down materials for her diaries on handy scraps of paper and assembling these to write up later." (40) It is significant that Montgomery took notes preparatory to writing in her journal. This practice points to the degree to which she carefully crafted her journals. Her entries are not the spontaneous outpourings of a single sitting. They are carefully constructed from notes taken, perhaps several times throughout a day or over a course of several days.

In a conscious effort to illustrate the transformation of her character, Montgomery wrote:

> It seems years since I laid down my pen at the close of that last entry. Between then and now stretches a century of suffering and horror, 'counting time by hearthrobs.' The girl who wrote on June 3rd is as dead as if the sod were heaped over her - dead past the possibility of any resurrection. (*SJ* I: 186; June 30, 1897)

Three months later, in the same vein, she wrote,

> In one way this summer has seemed long - in another short. I have not been happy or at peace. I have suffered continually - and it has done me good. I have *grown* much in some respects and I think I have gotten a great deal nearer to the *heart* of all things. I was a *girl* up to last spring - now I am a woman and I feel acutely that girlhood is gone forever. I have learned to look below the surface comedy of life into the tragedy underlying it. I have become *humanized* - no longer an isolated, selfish unit, I have begun to feel myself *one with my kind* - to see deeper into my own life and the lives of others. I have begun to *realize* life - to realize what someone has called 'the infinite sadness of living', and to realize how much each of us has it in our power to increase or alleviate that sadness. I understand at last that 'no man liveth to himself'. (*SJ* I: 195; Oct. 7, 1897)

Montgomery began to make connections between her old self and her present, transformed self and employed symbolism to illustrate the now tenuous connection to her past self. In recounting an incident in which her old Prince Albert school friend, Laura Pritchard, returned a ring that Montgomery had given to her now deceased friend Will, Montgomery wrote,

> I slipped it once more on my finger and thought of all the changes that have been, of all that has come and gone since last I wore it. It seemed like a golden link between me and my lost self, between the present and the past. (*SJ* I: 195-6; Oct. 7, 1897)

In the same style, a couple of paragraphs later, Montgomery wrote "Looking back on my past life I think I have had a rather peculiar spiritual experience..." (*SJ* I:196; Oct. 7,

1897). This pattern of "looking back on [her] past life" and making connections between past and present is a pattern that would be repeated throughout the journals. It is an effort to project a cohesive self, a self whose foibles and quirks make sense in relation to the accumulated experiences of her life. The self-analysis that will henceforth make up a large portion of her diary is part of her endeavour to create a distinctive and complex character.

Helen Buss, in an examination of the entries which tell the story of Montgomery's engagement to Ed Simpson and her love affair with Herman Leard, comments upon the artifice and literary convention employed by Montgomery in these entries. She observes,

> In these six passages - with their narrative compactness, their dramatically intense and stereotypically literary language of romance, their careful characterization, and their constant metatextual references to the writing act - is a sophisticated use of that most dominant of 19th century literary conventions: the two-suitors convention.[19]

Buss argues that Montgomery employs this convention subversively in order to construct an underlying message - her own development as a writer. Buss observes that Montgomery "strategically" places references to her successes in the literary market throughout the text of these entries, thus undermining the convention of romance-identified self-development. In other words, while on the surface Montgomery accounted for her transformation by recounting the story of her love affairs, if readers look beyond the surface, they will find that Montgomery's self-development was also centred on her literary successes at this time.

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[19] Helen M. Buss, "Decoding L.M. Montgomery's Journals / Encoding a Critical Practice for Women's Private Literature," *Essays On Canadian Literature* 54 (1994): 90.

In *Writing a Life*, Rubio and Waterston note Montgomery's unprecedented literary output at this time and attribute more importance to it than Montgomery seems to in her journal.

> All this time the basic passion of Montgomery's life - her enduring commitment to a writing career - was keeping pace with the development of her new passion for Herman and the withering of her previous engagement to Edwin. Between stormy sessions of wooing, she wrote, and she mailed, and she published.[20]

Montgomery rarely discussed her own writing in her journals. When she did deal with the subject of her writing, she rarely did so with seriousness. Following her narration of her affair with Herman Leard she wrote, somewhat disingenuously, "I turn from these passionate memories to other and lesser things." (*SJ* I, 220; Apr. 8, 1898) First in the list of "lesser things" is Montgomery's writing.

> I have had some successes in literature - several acceptances, some of them in new places. My work is a great comfort to me in these sad days. I forget all my griefs and perplexities while I am absorbed in it. I am very ambitious - perhaps too ambitious. Herman told me that once - he seemed to hate my ambition - perhaps he felt the truth that it was the real barrier between us. (*SJ* I, 220; Apr. 8, 1898)

The contradictory nature of Montgomery's words is startling. If her writing was not as important as her passion for Herman Leard, how could it possibly be a barrier between them? In fact, her writing was the most important thing in her life. It's as if she did not want to project too high an opinion of herself as a writer. However, she could project a character who was serious about her writing. After her affairs with Edwin Simpson and Herman Leard, Montgomery set writing at the centre of her identity. Her life became

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[20] Rubio & Waterston. *Writing a Life*, 34.

less eventful and exciting, and her entries more infrequent. When she did write, she wrote long, reflective entries with a far more sober tone - a tone more befitting a writer than the ebullient, chatty tone of her earlier entries. She herself commented on the transformation of character portrayed in her journal.

> In my many long lonely moments I have been passing the time by reading over old letters and the part of my journal written when I was attending P.W.C. How light-hearted and merry and nonsensical it was! (*SJ* I, 221; Apr. 8, 1898)

It is not clear at this point whether Montgomery was writing her journal with publication in mind. She had not yet achieved the fame that would soon come with the publication of *Anne of Green Gables*. Yet many passages seem to be written for publication. Her description of a "pie social", for example, in her entry for April 4, 1899, is an amusing and satirical portrayal of social life in the island community. It could almost be lifted out of her journal and placed in a story.

Indeed, Montgomery did reproduce passages directly from her journal for her stories and other material that would become public literature. Launching into a reminiscence of her childhood in her entry for August 5, 1900, Montgomery wrote,

> What an indefatigable little scribbler I was, and what a stack of MSS - now, alas, reduced to ashes, bore testimony to the same! For I was always writing; sometimes prose - and then all the little incidents of my not very exciting life were described. I wrote descriptions of my favourite haunts, biographies of my cats, histories of visits and school affairs, and even critical reviews of the books I had read.[21]

The rest of this entry is transcribed, "with few changes" according to the editors of the

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[21] L.M. Montgomery, *Journals of L.M. Montgomery, profusely illustrated with photographs and other memorabilia, 1884-1929*. L.M. Montgomery Collection, McLaughlin Library, University of Guelph, Guelph (Aug.5, 1900).

Selected Journals, into Montgomery's official autobiography, *The Alpine Path*. However, when she was writing this passage, she could have had no idea that an autobiography would be commissioned from her. The publication of *Anne of Green Gables* was still eight years away, and while she *was* meeting with success in the publication of her short stories, such success did not inspire any great interest in her personal life by her readers. Montgomery's transcription of this passage into her official autobiography reveals the effort that she expended in writing her journal entries. To be able to transcribe passages from her journal, with few changes, to a published autobiography demonstrates the extent to which Montgomery shaped the narrative of her life into literature.

Because of the structure and formality of Montgomery's journal, it was an invaluable source book for her professional writing. In the introduction to volume II of *The Selected Journals*, Mary Rubio writes,

> By 1910, when her career as a novelist took off, she began to see how important the journals were to her writing, how they could help her recover her lost world of childhood. The journals became a professional source book. (*SJ* II, xi)

Throughout her journals, Montgomery would periodically launch into long reminiscences about her childhood, or take up a theme in her life, and thereupon develop a story. She was then able to go back to these passages and lift them, almost verbatim, into her professional writing. In an entry for August 1, 1892 Montgomery recorded long reminiscences about her childhood friends David and Wellington Nelson. This passage was written after a visit from her two friends with whom she had just been rehashing these memories. She set up her story with tone and setting. "The evening was clear and cool. The west was tinted in rose-pine and creamy yellow and our gay voices and

laughter echoed far over the fragrant, dewy fields."[22] Through the use of atmosphere and humour, Montgomery transports her reader back into the world of childhood.

> But our minds were weak and our imaginations strong; we soon came to believe implicitly in our own myths and none of us would have gone near that grove after sunset on pain of death. Death! What was death compared to the unearthly possibility of falling into the clutches of a 'white thing.'[23]

This is a style that she would use to her advantage in *Anne of Green Gables* and many other books. In fact, she used much of this material for *The Story Girl* and *Rainbow Valley*.

Montgomery often commented upon the therapeutic purpose of her journals. As she began the story of Herman Leard she wrote, "I think it will help me to 'write it out'. It always does." (*SJ* I, 208; Apr. 8, 1898) In a later, discouraged, and unhappy entry, she remarked, "This grumble has done me good...If it were not for this 'went' I might fly into a thousand little pieces someday." (*SJ* I, 255; Dec. 22, 1900) And much later, after writing passionately of the effect that her husband's mental illness was having upon her, she confessed,

> I find that 'writing it out' here helps me to endure. When I feel that I have come to 'the end of my rope' I write it here - and find at the close of writing that the rope has lengthened a little and I can go on. (Mar. 16, 1924)[24]

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[22] Montgomery, *Journals of L.M. Montgomery* (Aug. 1, 1892).

[23] Montgomery, *Journals of L.M. Montgomery* (Aug.1, 1892)

[24] L.M. Montgomery, *The Selected Journals of L.M. Montgomery* v.III: 1921-1929, ed. Mary Rubio & Elizabeth Waterston (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992) 170. Hereafter, all references to the *Selected Journals* v.III will be made parenthetically, within the text, as *SJ* III.

In view of these comments, which are sprinkled throughout the journals, it is interesting that Montgomery never wrote while she was in a passionate state of mind over an unsettling event. It was only after she had distanced herself physically and emotionally from her experiences that she could commit them to paper. In the introduction to volume two of *The Selected Journals*, Mary Rubio writes,

> Montgomery put off writing down something that was hard for her to handle emotionally. She seemed to feel threatened by the idea that to write it down was to make it real. On the other hand, she acknowledged that the only way to move beyond a difficult experience was to put it into words, giving it a fixed temporal reality, so that she could proceed with her life. (*SJ* II, xix)

Another possibility is that she made a habit of not writing about emotionally volatile subjects as she experienced them. Perhaps she did not want her writing to be controlled by her emotions. She wanted complete control over her narrative and her self-dramatization. It seems unlikely that Montgomery could have written the coherent, structured, and sophisticated account of her affair with Herman Leard while she was experiencing it. She needed to make sense of her experience, to shape it into a narrative. After a three-month break from writing in her journal during her engagement to Edwin Simpson, Montgomery began her entry by declaring, "I have got out this journal at last - I have neglected it for months, for I *could not* write." (*SJ* I, 195; Oct. 7, 1897) And while she wrote a long, reflective entry about her past life, she did not mention the turmoil that she was experiencing regarding the engagement. In her next entry she explained,

> I am going to take a good dose of confession regarding my miserable affair with Edwin Simpson. I *could not* say anything about it in my last entry because I was in the worst possible state of mind over it and even

> to allude to the subject would have hurt me like a rude touch on a raw wound. But I am somewhat calmer now, so I may as well see how my wretched feelings look when written out in cold blood. (*SJ* I, 201; Jan. 22, 1898)

Yet, even as she wrote this entry, she was experiencing her tempestuous affair with Herman Leard, who is hardly mentioned. She acknowledged her silence on this subject at the end of the entry.

> Well, this is all - and yet it is 'the play of Hamlet with Hamlet left out'. Perhaps some day I may write it once again with Hamlet in - and perhaps I shall never feel that I can! (*SJ* I, 204; Jan. 22, 1898)

It is significant that when Montgomery stated that "she could not write," she meant that she could not write about that particular experience. For she was certainly writing at the time. She was writing poetry, short stories, and passages in her journals that did not deal directly with the emotional upheavals that she was experiencing. When she did finally write about Herman Leard, she shaped it into a story. In the very first paragraph, she set the tone for the heartbreak that was to follow.

> It is just after dark; the shadows have gathered thickly over the old white hills and around the old quiet trees. The last red stains of the lingering sunset have faded out of the west and the dull grey clouds have settled down over the horizon again. (*SJ* I, 204; Jan. 22, 1898)

Montgomery used the landscape to symbolize the emotional turmoil of her affair with Herman Leard. The "last red stains of the lingering sunset" represent her passion for Herman Leard which she was now trying to suppress. As a result of this suppression, "dull grey clouds have settled down over the horizon again." Now that the affair was over, Montgomery would settle down once again to a dull, quiet life. This introductory paragraph is a very deliberate effort to transform her experience into literature.

Montgomery wrote of her passion, yet she was not in the throes of passion as she wrote. She constructed, "in cold blood," a romantic, literary version of her personal experience.

It becomes clear, then, that Montgomery's journal was not an informal writing space. It was highly structured, indeed almost ritualized. While it is impossible to come to any definite conclusions about her journal writing process, it is apparent that she used notes to compose the entries in her journal. The entries from her honeymoon, for example, were all transcribed from a notebook that she carried with her through England and Scotland. Later, in the second volume of *The Selected Journals*, she herself referred to her habit of taking notes before composing an entry in her journal.

> This has been a busy, typical average week. For my own amusement I jotted down in my note-book a detailed account of my doings throughout the whole week. I will copy it here. My descendants may read it with interest and my great-great-grandchildren may use it as a peg on which to hang compassionate opinions as to what country ministers' wives did back in the old-fashioned days a century ago! (*SJ* II, 395; Jan. 16, 1921)

This passage reveals many things about Montgomery's attitude toward her journal. Her sense of audience here is made plain. It also shows that Montgomery carefully selected the details that would be included in her journal. She always wanted her journal to be interesting, not only to herself but also to her future audience. And she wanted to make clear the ironic contrast between her literary endeavours and her work in the parish as a minister's wife.

Montgomery would often begin a new volume of her journal with reluctance. "Perhaps it is because the last volume - or rather, the life it reflected - was so bitter and tragic." (*SJ* II, 1; Feb. 11, 1910) Montgomery was calling attention here to the distinction between her life and the written record of her life. She considered the

difference between what her journal reflected and reality.

> The first volume seems - I think - to have been written by a rather shallow girl, whose sole aim was to 'have a good time' and who thought of little else than the surface play of life. Yet nothing could be falser to reality....The second volume gives the impression of a morbid temperament, generally in the throes of nervousness and gloom. Yet this, too, is false. (*SJ* II,1; Feb. 11, 1910)

She decided that she would try to "strike a better balance" in the new volume.

> And I mean to try, as far as in me lies, to paint my life and deeds - ay, and my thoughts - truthfully, no matter how unflattering such truth may be to me. No life document has any real value otherwise. (*SJ* II, 1; Feb. 11, 1910)

This passage reveals a consciousness of the value of her journal. She was trying to create something of lasting importance and worth. Through rereading her journal, she could appraise what she had already written and consider how she could improve it in the future. It is significant that she used the artistic term "paint" with reference to the words that recount her life story. Montgomery recognized the artistry involved in her effort. She acknowledged the literary quality of her journal. Nonetheless, Montgomery did not have control over her own story as she did over her fictional stories. "So, for good or evil, I begin this volume. I turn over its blank pages with a shrinking wonder. *What will be written in them.*" (*SJ* II, 2; Feb. 11, 1910) Yet, despite this limited control over the content of her story, she did have control over the form of her story, and it is that which makes her journal a literary text.

Montgomery again took up the subject of autobiography later in the second volume of *The Selected Journals*. After reading "Mrs. Asquith's autobiography," Montgomery began to reflect on the issue of truth and untruth in the autobiographical

endeavour. She considered her own journals and the self portrayed therein. She concluded that no autobiography can be a completely truthful account of the narrator.

> I do not believe any human being can - or would if he could - make a thorough and absolutely frank analysis of himself or herself. Even if one could be sufficiently detached to be able to do it one wouldn't. There are some faults that we all are willing to acknowledge; some that the frank ones among us will acknowledge and *some* faults - I believe in *everyone* - which nothing would induce us to admit...I could not, even in these diaries which no eye but mine ever sees, write frankly down what I discern in myself. (*SJ* II, 391; Dec. 13, 1920)

While Montgomery contemplated the nature of truth in autobiography, she did so only in terms of what is left out of the story. She did not consider that the material that is included in the autobiography might also be subject to the same questions. She did not consider what Sidonie Smith calls the "agonizing questions inherent in self-representation."[25] Smith rejects the idea of the "self" of autobiography as "an a priori essence, a spontaneous and therefore 'true' presence." Rather, the autobiographical self is "a cultural and linguistic 'fiction' constituted through historical ideologies of selfhood and the process of our storytelling."[26] By means of selection, emphasis, omission and commentary, the autobiographer is creating a fiction and a fictive persona. As Montgomery recorded her experiences and tried to make sense out of her life and her self, she was, in fact, constructing a fictional self. While she may have sometimes believed that she was being perfectly frank about what she perceived in herself, she could not possibly be completely objective and analytical. As Sidonie Smith points out,

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[25] Sidonie Smith, *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987) 5.

[26] Smith, 45.

"Because the autobiographer can never capture the fullness of her subjectivity or understand the entire range of her experience, the narrative 'I' becomes a fictive persona."[27]

As Montgomery considered the questions of truth and untruth in autobiography, she decided to "describe and analyze" herself on the basis that "It will be amusing and interesting." (*SJ* II, 392; Dec. 13, 1920) She begins with a detailed description of her physical appearance. Whether she did so because she considered her physical appearance to be of utmost importance is open to debate, but it is significant that this takes up over one third of the space allotted to her self-analysis. Moreover, she has included, throughout her journal, photographs of herself, so that this description is somewhat redundant. She was careful to be modest about her appearance, recording her physical attributes objectively and referring to the opinions of others for judgements of beauty. The remainder of the entry is very sketchy and judgemental, with Montgomery making pat statements about her personality, with no real attempt at analysis. Perhaps she allotted so much space to her physical appearance in order to avoid the real issue of self-analysis. The reader is by no means left with a deeper understanding of Montgomery's character at the end of this entry. In fact, it is significant that Montgomery never once referred directly to her writing, the single most defining aspect of her character.

Montgomery often commented on what she perceived as the stark contrast between her real and public selves. Her "true" self, she declared, was revealed only in her journals. When a Toronto journalist wanted to write a biographical article about her,

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[27] Smith, 46.

Montgomery wrote in her journal,

> Well, I'll give him the bare facts he wants. He will not know any more about the real *me* or my real life for it all, nor will his reader. The only key to *that* is found in this old journal. (*SJ* I, 342; Nov. 10, 1908)

She was adamant that the public's perception of her was completely false. After being interviewed by schoolgirls in Toronto, she commented, "The contrast between my real self and what those worshippers of *Anne* believe me to be is too ludicrous." (*SJ* II, 232; Dec. 7, 1917) The recurring metaphor that Montgomery used to express her public self was that of a "mask." She developed this metaphor during her affair with Herman Leard and she used it throughout her life. For Montgomery, it was a matter of pride that no one should see beyond the carefully constructed mask that she chose to wear for the world.

> In the morning I will dress and do my hair and go down with a smile to exchange greetings and tell about my visit and make business-like arrangements for my departure. But in this one precious little hour of solitude I can throw aside the mask and look on my naked soul, knowing that no prying human eye gloats over the revelation. (*SJ* I, 194: June 30, 1897)

Nor did she have much sympathy for women who did not mask their own bitterness Of her childhood friend, Amanda MacNeill, she wrote,

> Poor Amanda, life is a rather sombre thing for her, I fear, and she cannot, or does not, try to hide its sombreness. She lets it spread into other people's lives...She is a foolish girl to let the world see her bitterness - the world which only mocks. It never pities anyone - and even if it did the world's pity is a very stinging thing. I'll none of it - whatever my troubles are I'll mask them with a smile on my face as long as I can.[28]

Upon considering her impending marriage to Ewan, she prepared to don a more elaborate mask, a mask which would not only conceal her unhappiness but would also conceal her

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[28] Montgomery, *Journals of L.M. Montgomery* (July 31, 1902).

opinions and true character.

> The life of a country minister's wife has always appeared to me as a synonym for respectable slavery - a life in which a woman of any independence in belief or character, must either be a failure from an 'official' point of view, or must cloak her real self under an assumed orthodoxy and conventionalism that must prove very stifling at times. (*SJ* I, 321; Oct. 12, 1906)

Loath to become "a failure from an 'official' point of view," Montgomery chose to mask her character and become the perfect minister's wife. While she complained and suffered under the stifling orthodoxy and conventionalism of her role, she seemed to take pleasure in her skill and success at playing this role. When a young woman in her community commented that she did not believe that the minister's wife could ever feel "blue and despondent," Montgomery remarked,

> I wonder what she would think if she could read some of the pages of this journal. But perhaps it may be accounted unto me for righteousness that I confine my blues to my journal and don't scatter them abroad in my household or community. (*SJ* III, 4; May 1, 1921)

And when a member of her congregation observed that she always seemed so bright and happy, Montgomery responded to her journal,

> Happy! With my heart wrung as it is! With a constant ache of loneliness in my being. With no one to help me guide and train and control my sons! With my husband at that very moment lying on his bed, gazing at the ceiling and worrying over having committed the unpardonable sin! Well I must be a good actress. (*SJ* III, 16; Aug. 18, 1921)

The *Journals* reveal Montgomery with the mask off. But in her journals she wore another kind of mask - the mask of conscious self-construction. Montgomery could use her journal to express a self that was kept hidden from public view. She could discuss things in her journal, such as her sexuality, her unhappiness in marriage, some of her

more unconventional opinions, that she felt she could not discuss in public. In her journal, she felt free to be a writer, to express her creativity and unique vision of the world without fear of criticism. Yet her journals do not give the full picture of Montgomery's life. Mollie Gillen, in her biography of Montgomery, writes, "Even her books do not reveal the full truth about this complex, deeply introspective woman."[29] Nor do her journals reveal the full truth. The journals express a darker side, a side that Montgomery kept hidden from the public. But they give little insight into the brighter side of Montgomery's life, the brighter side that she kept hidden from her journals. Montgomery's contemporaries remember her as a happy, charming woman. Many expressed shock and disbelief upon encountering the woman depicted in the journals. The editors of Montgomery's journals, who have interviewed countless people who knew Montgomery, eventually came to realize that although the journals expressed one side of Montgomery's complex personality, they did not show the whole picture.

> We saw that no such thing as a 'true personality' could ever emerge from these diaries. Even Montgomery said her diaries were 'grumble' books serving a specific function: expressing the unhappiness that she was conditioned as a woman to suppress. Furthermore...interviews with people who had known her suggested that the personality in the diaries was not in fact the personality whom people in her circle had known. Yet, it was impossible to separate the living woman who purported to write the diaries and the literary persona she created in them; and what could anyone make of the fact that she herself perhaps came to believe that her literary construct was in fact the 'real Maud'?[30]

On one level Montgomery's journals are a record of her life and her thoughts on

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[29] Mollie Gillen, *The Wheel of Things: a Biography of L.M. Montgomery author of Anne of Green Gables*, (Don Mills: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1975) 59.

[30] Rubio, "A dusting off", 33

the various experiences of her life. However, they are a literary construct, and as such we cannot find in them the "true" Montgomery. We catch glimpses of her but we never see her fully revealed. Laura Higgins, in a study of some of the photographs in the journals, discusses a photo of Montgomery in which her face is partially concealed by a veil. She interprets this symbolically as the way in which Montgomery reveals herself in her journal.

> This snapshot offers us a paradigm for reading the photographic and written 'texts' of her journals...She has positioned us as observers eager for a glimpse of her private, personal self. Here, Montgomery exhibits her talent for controlling what we see of her, for conserving and preserving those parts of her identity which she has no wish to reveal. While encouraging us to read the illustrated journals for messages about her self, she warns us that there are many layers of self-construction and concealment to negotiate. Careful self-construction has ensured that what little privacy Montgomery still possessed after her marriage remains unviolated after her death. [31]

In *The Selected Journals* the reader becomes increasingly aware of the fictive quality of the diaries and the creation of Montgomery herself as the central character. The journals are, in many ways, similar to her novels, in their expression of the beauty of nature, the storytelling, the little barbs of wit and satire that are sprinkled throughout. However, her journals reveal darker, more analytical and psychologically complex issues that Montgomery did not overtly explore in her fiction. But as Montgomery grew older and increasingly dissatisfied with her lot in life, the darker elements of her life story began to intrude, almost surreptitiously, into her fiction. The novels written during the 1920s, after Montgomery had been emotionally ravaged by the events of World War I,

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[31] Laura Higgins, "Snapshot Portraits: Finding L.M. Montgomery in her 'Dear Den.'" *Harvesting Thistles*, 109.

and while she was dealing with her husband's debilitating mental illness, explore many of the themes of loneliness and alienation that are found in the journals. Significantly, those novels, the *Emily* trilogy, are considered by Montgomery and critics as her most "autobiographical" work. It is important to note that while Montgomery was writing *Emily of New Moon*, she was in the midst of recopying her journals. Her journal proved to be invaluable to Montgomery in writing the *Emily* novels. She used it as a means to re-enter her past and recreate the experiences of the female artist. Montgomery's journals can be used as an interpretive tool to her fiction. To read the fiction intertextually with the journals is to discover new meaning and significance in each. The journals speak the silences in the fiction, and the fiction speaks the silences in the journals.

Chapter 2

Reconstructing Childhood: Emily of New Moon

During the winter of 1918-19, L.M. Montgomery began to recopy her journals into uniform volumes. Recopying her journals was, for Montgomery, a journey into her past. The act of writing brought back her past life with incredible clarity. Upon completing the first volume of her journal, Montgomery wrote, "Writing it, much more than reading it, brought back all the past very vividly. I seemed to be living it over again as I wrote it day by day." (*SJ* II, 367-8; Jan. 18, 1920)

Montgomery had good reason to want to relive her past life. Her present life was filled with tragedy, worry and extreme unhappiness. The First World War had an enormous impact on Montgomery. Her journal entries of the time reflect the agony and fear with which she had followed the news of the war. The war years were also marked by the stillborn death of her son Hugh in 1914. An ongoing law suit against her publisher over the payment of royalties kept her nervous and unhappy. In January of 1919, the death of Montgomery's beloved cousin, Frede Campbell, was an enormous emotional blow. To complete the string of tragedy with which Montgomery's life was beset, during the summer of 1919, her husband Ewan began to show signs of severe manic depression, diagnosed as "religious melancholia" at the time.

By the end of 1919, Montgomery had written nine novels and a volume of short stories. Six of the novels were about Anne Shirley or her descendants. Montgomery had surrendered to pressure from her publisher and her reading public to continue to produce

"more about Anne." Although her literary success had gone far beyond her wildest expectations, she felt that she was in a rut and longed to break away from "Anne" and write something completely different. On August 24, 1924, Montgomery wrote in her journal, "I am done with *Anne* forever - I swear it as a dark and deadly vow." (*SJ* II, 390)[32] She wrote passionately of her need to break out of this pattern.

> And I want - oh, I want to write - something entirely different from anything I have written yet. I am becoming classed as a 'writer for young people' and that only. I want to write a book dealing with grown-up creatures - a psychological study of one human being's life. (*SJ* II 390)

Out of this desire, "Emily" was born. The character of "Emily" is very much a result of Montgomery's journey into her past via her journals. The journals are the primary source for *Emily of New Moon*. Rereading and recopying her journals, Montgomery began to recognize their literary merit. As she recopied she became increasingly anxious to try her hand at something different. The Journals are an intensely personal portrait of the female artist. Montgomery represented her own experiences as a female artist struggling to survive in a patriarchal culture in the *Emily* trilogy. The *Emily* books are a record of Montgomery's own development as a writer. Rubio and Waterston write of the Emily series,

> In this new series Montgomery draws, not on her memory of childhood in general, but on her own unusual growth, the intimations of literary power that had filled and sustained her all her life. Her readiness to communicate this experience through the medium of her new protagonist reflects the fact that since the war Montgomery had been steadily recopying the early parts of her diaries. In the process she had become

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[32] Of course Montgomery was not done with *Anne*. Although she abandoned the *Anne* series for years, she returned to it in the 1930s with the publication of *Anne of Windy Poplars* and *Anne of Ingleside*.

> newly aware of how she had maintained her own commitment to writing despite incredible discouragements during her apprentice years in Prince Edward Island. Writing that first 'Emily' book in 1921, Montgomery recounted the ways in which her own early and persistent desire to become an author had been sneered at by those who mattered to her. [33]

Denise Yeast echoes this point in her thesis on Montgomery's private and public writing: "Reading the *Journals* intertextually with the novels makes it evident that Montgomery wrote Emily to explicate her own psychosocial position as a woman writer."[34] Because of the subject matter and the intimacy of the characterization, *Emily of New Moon* is Montgomery's most radical and subversive work, and Emily is her most human creation.

Montgomery always borrowed freely from her journals to provide material for her novels and stories. Childhood experiences were often copied verbatim into her fiction. However, Montgomery generally recycled her happy memories for her fiction, saving her more bitter and personal experiences for her eyes alone. With Emily, however, Montgomery borrowed some of the most personal experiences recorded in her journal.

While Montgomery was mulling over the character of Emily in her mind and collecting material for her new book, she was in the process of recopying her journal from her Cavendish years. It is undoubtedly the record of these years that provided much material for the first few chapters of *Emily of New Moon*. During these years, Montgomery was going through a great deal of soul-searching which involved meditating over her past life. Two entries in particular, those of January 2, 1905 and January 7,

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[33] Rubio & Waterston, *Writing a Life*, 73.

[34] Denise Elaine Yeast, *Negotiating and Articulating a Self: an Intertextual Reading of L.M. Montgomery's Public and Private Writings* (University of Calgary, 1993) 73.

1910, provide detailed reminiscences of her childhood. For Montgomery, the act of writing out an experience was very close to living the experience. Writing made the experience far more vivid than simply pondering it in her mind or rereading it in her journal. Upon completing her Cavendish journal, Montgomery wrote, "I have lived over those old years in thus writing them over - relived them more vividly and intensely than I have ever done in reading them." (*SJ* II, 405; Mar. 13, 1921) Those years, which tell the story of Montgomery's literary apprenticeship and contain reminiscences from her childhood, provided the inspiration for Emily.

Emily of New Moon, however, is not simply recycled material from Montgomery's journal. The novel also explores many issues over which Montgomery remained silent in her journals. The issue of gender roles was rarely addressed in Montgomery's journals. When she did discuss women's issues she took a remarkably conservative position. Molly Gillen, in her biography *The Wheel of Things*, discusses Montgomery's views on feminism.

> In a limited way, Maud was one of the early feminists, setting out to earn her own living as a reporter in the early 1900s, and she was certainly one of Canada's earliest successful freelance writers, long before she produced her unexpected best seller. She made brave sounds, this independent, semi-feminist Maud. But she still considered the Victorian wife-and-mother ideal as the first and most important role for a woman, and saw education as a personal enrichment within the happier state of marriage, or at least something to fall back on if she remained single.[35]

This attitude is surprising considering that Montgomery's chosen career was well outside of the traditional life choices for women. In addition, with the winning of the

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[35] Gillen, 88.

vote and other privileges historically denied to women, the position of women was one of the important topics of the time. Montgomery did not hesitate to discuss other important matters in her journals, where, in particular, she voiced her unconventional views on religion. It is peculiar, then, that she chose to remain largely silent on this issue in her journals. This silence, however, is compensated for in the *Emily* books. While women's issues are not overtly discussed, the novels certainly exhibit feminist ideas and sympathies. It is interesting to note, however, that Emily is at her most headstrong and independent in the first novel, *Emily of New Moon*. It is in this first novel that Emily most vehemently states her one purpose in life: to write. Emily's fierce ambition is most explicit when Emily is a child of 11 to 14. As she grows older, Emily begins to conform to traditional roles for women. While her writing is always important to her, other things begin to intrude on her singular purpose in life. By the third novel, *Emily's Quest*, romance begins to compete with ambition, and the reader realizes that ultimately Emily's ambition will be sacrificed in favour of her female destiny: to marry and bear children. As with most of Montgomery's extraordinary children, Emily is at her most rebellious and subversive when she is a child. T.D. MacLuclich comments upon Montgomery's tendency to eventually lead her characters down the path of female conformity.

> Even Anne and Emily, Montgomery's most talented and self-willed young artists, lose much of their rebelliousness as they grow into womanhood. In the end, they meekly agree to marry the mate that Montgomery has created especially for them. Montgomery, then, cannot let her heroine's literary career interfere with the course of true love. This outcome is disappointing. It seems to represent a failure on Montgomery's part of

both the literary and social imagination. [36]

Do Emily's eventual marriage and conformity represent, as MacLulich would have it, a failure of Montgomery's imagination? Montgomery herself seemed to fluctuate between duty and rebellion. As seen in her journals, Montgomery often presented to the world a mask of conformity while inwardly seething with rebellion. MacLulich, however, goes on to insist that Montgomery was ultimately a conformist and that she became more conservative in her views as she grew older.

> Montgomery's lifelong commitment to the imagination was tempered by an alternative commitment that grew stronger throughout her career, a commitment to the moral and social norms she had learned during her childhood. Montgomery's strongest fiction portrays apostles of the imagination who rebel against the standards of a conservative community. But Mrs. Grundy always seems to be looking over Montgomery's shoulder as she writes, so that Montgomery never dares to let her protagonists put themselves deeply and permanently at odds with their society. Unlike most twentieth-century writers - men or women - Montgomery does not endorse the priority of the artist's needs over the needs of society. In her fiction she habitually resolves the conflict between society and the imaginative individual in favor of conformity to societal expectation.[37]

MacLulich's assessment is not altogether fair. Reading the journals, it is evident that Montgomery was not so absolutely committed to social norms as MacLulich suggests. While she did accept many of the social conventions of her day, she also showed admiration for pioneering women.[38] As Mary Rubio points out, Montgomery was deeply

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[36] T.D. MacLulich, "L.M. Montgomery's Portraits of the Artist: Realism, Idealism, and the Domestic Imagination," *English Studies in Canada* 11 (1985): 91.

[37] MacLulich, 98.

[38] Montgomery co-authored a book of essays entitled *Courageous Women*. This book pays tribute to pioneering women such as Laura Secord, Catherine Parr Traill and Edith Cavell. While not overtly feminist, this book does show that Montgomery admired women who diverged from the traditional paths of female conformity.

conflicted about issues of women's proper sphere. "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."[39] This ambivalence is reflected throughout the Emily trilogy.

Emily of New Moon is the story of a young girl orphaned at the age of eleven and given over to the care of her relatives. The reader becomes immediately aware that Emily is a unique individual. Most of Montgomery's heroines are unique in some way. Anne is notable for her vivid imagination, her stormy temper and her headstrong ways. *The Story Girl* is unique for her incredible story-telling abilities. Emily, however, is somehow different, set apart from regular people. She is Montgomery's most assertive and self-centred character.

Emily's independent spirit and unique individuality are established on the very first page of *Emily of New Moon*. The novel begins with a description of the house in which Emily lives. In Montgomery's symbolic code, houses always reflect the personalities of their inhabitants.

> The house in the hollow was 'a mile from anywhere' - so Maywood people said. It was situated in a grassy little dale, looking as if it had never been built like other houses but had grown up there like a big, brown mushroom. It was reached by a long, green lane and almost hidden from view by an encircling growth of young birches. No other house could be seen from it although the village was just over the hill.[40]

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[39] Mary Rubio, "Subverting the trite: L.M. Montgomery's 'room of her own,'" *Canadian Children's Literature* 65 (1992): 24.

[40] L.M. Montgomery, *Emily of New Moon* (Toronto: Seal Books, 1983) 1. Hereafter all references to *ENM* will be referred to parenthetically within the text of the paper.

Emily, as the reader will discover, is similar to the house in several respects. She is not like other children, certainly not like other girls her age. Her personality has not been "built" by the influences typical to a girl's upbringing in turn of the century Canada. As the entrance to the house is "almost hidden from view," so access to Emily's true self is kept hidden from everyone except those very close to her. Like the house, Emily is solitary and sufficient unto herself.

The narrator continues to expand on Emily's individuality by means of a comment on Emily's reading material. Emily, we are told, has been reading John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* and has been thrilling to the exciting adventures of its characters. *The Pilgrim's Progress* was one of Montgomery's own favourites, as she relates in her journal entry for January 7, 1910,

> *Pilgrim's Progress* was read and re-read with never failing delight. Many a time did I walk the strait and narrow path with *Christian* and *Christiana* - although I never liked *Christiana's* adventures half so well as *Christian's*. For one thing there was such a crowd with *Christiana*; she had not half the fascination of that solitary intrepid figure who faced all alone the shadows of the dark valley and the encounter with *Apollyon*...I am proud of liking *Pilgrim's Progress*. (*SJ* I, 374)

Montgomery's pride in liking *Pilgrim's Progress* suggests that she believed her literary taste made her unique in some way. This early appreciation for classic literature was, to Montgomery, an affirmation of her individuality and intelligence. Montgomery bestows upon Emily these same qualities by providing her with the same literary influences. The words from the journal are copied almost verbatim into the novel.

> Emily loved *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Many a time had she walked the straight and narrow path with *Christian* and *Christiana* - although she never liked *Christiana's* adventures half as well as *Christian's*. For one thing, there was always such a crowd with *Christiana*. She had not half

> the fascination of that solitary, intrepid figure who faced all alone the shadows of the Dark Valley and the encounter with Apollyon. Darkness and hobgoblins were nothing when you had plenty of company. But to be *alone* - ah, Emily shivered with the delicious horror of it! (*ENM* 3)

It is not merely the fact that Montgomery and her heroine *like The Pilgrim's Progress* that makes them special. It is also their unusual identification with the male character. It is *Christian's* courage and independence that makes him so attractive. It is significant that, following this discussion of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the reader is introduced to Emily's cat, "Saucy Sal," a cat with whom she identifies and which she eventually takes with her to New Moon.

> There was a sort of weird beauty about her that appealed to Emily. She was grey-and-white - very white and very sleek, with a long, pointed face, very long ears and very green eyes. She was a redoubtable fighter, and strange cats were vanquished in one round. The fearless little spitfire would even attack dogs and route them utterly...But she worried considerably because Saucy Sal didn't have kittens. (*ENM* 4-5)

Once again, by means of association, Emily is identified as independent and fearless. Moreover, Saucy Sal's failure to have kittens might be interpreted analogously as Emily's defiance of gender expectations.

Another "character" is introduced in this first chapter. "Emily in the Glass" is Emily's childhood name for her reflection. She speaks affectionately to her reflection, smiling at herself and blowing kisses. Thus, Emily's sense of self and pride in herself are emphasized. Emily is a self-possessed child with few insecurities. It is possible to go a step further with the symbolism of the mirror. Montgomery's use of the mirror symbolism is interesting considering the autobiographical nature of the novel. She may be calling attention to the possibility of Emily as a mirror image of herself.

The single most important element of Emily's personality, that she is a writer and that she experiences a moment of creative inspiration which she calls "the flash," is made clear in this first chapter. Emily is out walking by herself when the reader learns that she is a writer.

> There was a sudden rift in the curdled clouds westward, and a lovely, pale, pinky-green lake of sky with a new moon in it. Emily stood and looked at it with clasped hands and her little black head upturned. She must go home and write down a description of it in the yellow account book...It would hurt her with its beauty until she wrote it down...And then, for one glorious, supreme moment, came "the flash." (*ENM* 6-7)

Montgomery rarely discussed her own writing in her journals. She would report sales of stories to magazines. She might comment that she was writing something or had just published something. Every once in a while she would discuss her ambitions as a writer. However, her actual writing process was never openly discussed. With Emily this silence is finally broken. Through Emily's voice and the voice of the narrator, the reader hears Montgomery's own thoughts on writing and creativity. Montgomery gives to Emily the gift of creative inspiration that she possessed herself. Again, she borrows almost verbatim from her own personal experience of inspiration for Emily. On January 2, 1905, Montgomery wrote in her journal,

> It has always seemed to me, ever since I can remember, that, amid all the commonplaces of life, I was very near to a kingdom of ideal beauty. Between it and me hung only a thin veil. I could never draw it quite aside but sometimes a wind fluttered it and I seemed to catch a glimpse of the enchanting realm beyond -only a glimpse -but those glimpses have always made life worthwhile. (*SJ* I, 301)

It is this moment that Emily calls "the flash," and it is closely tied to her identity as a writer. By bestowing this moment of inspiration onto Emily, Montgomery is linking her

most private feelings with Emily. She is identifying Emily with herself, or with a version of herself.

In the first chapter of *Emily of New Moon*, the reader learns that Emily's father is very sick and will soon die, leaving the orphaned Emily to the care of her maternal relations. Again we see the parallels between Emily and Montgomery. Montgomery's "orphanhood"[41] had a huge impact on her life and work. Several of Montgomery's novels have an orphan as the main character. In the novels that do not feature an orphan as the main character, there is always an orphan featured in the supporting cast of characters. As Montgomery's journals became more introspective as she grew older, she increasingly attributed the growth of her character to her upbringing by her grandparents. In one such introspective entry, Montgomery wrote, "It is a dreadful thing to lose one's mother in childhood! I know that from bitter experience." (*SJ* I, 300; Jan. 2, 1905) Of her childhood, she wrote,

> I seemed to myself in those years to be alone, with all the world - *my* world - against me. My childish faults and short-comings - of which I had plenty - were all detailed to the Macneill uncles and aunts whenever they came to the house. I resented this more bitterly than anything else. Other children's faults were not exploited by their parents in family conclave. Why then should mine be? Again, these aforesaid uncles and aunts arrogated the right to reprove and scold me at their own will and pleasure, as they would never have dared to do had I had parents to resent it. (*SJ* I, 301; Jan. 2, 1905)

Montgomery emphasized the importance of her orphanhood by recalling, with great

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[41] Technically, Montgomery was not an orphan. Her mother died when Montgomery was 22 months old, but her father did not die until she was in her twenties. However, Hugh John Montgomery left his daughter to her maternal grandparents' care after his wife's death, leaving her a virtual orphan.

emotion and detail, her mother's funeral.

> I was very young at the time - barely twenty months old - but I remember it perfectly...My mother was lying there in her coffin. My father was standing by her and holding me in his arms. I remember that I wore a little white dress of embroidered muslin and that father was crying...I did not feel any sorrow for I realized nothing of what it all meant. I was only vaguely troubled. Why was mother so still? And why was father crying? I reached down and laid my baby hand against mother's cheek. Even yet I can feel the peculiar coldness of that touch...Somebody in the room sobbed and said, "Poor child!" (*SJ* II, 205; Jan. 5, 1917)

Although it is questionable that a child not yet two years old could have a memory so vivid in detail, this passage serves to illuminate what Montgomery felt was one of the most defining events of her life. It is significant, then, that Montgomery gives this memory to Emily. When Emily's father asks her if she remembers her mother's death, Emily responds with Montgomery's own memory of that time,

> "I remember the funeral, Father - I remember it *distinctly*. You were standing in the middle of a room, holding me in your arms, and Mother was lying just before us in a long, black box. And you were crying - and I couldn't think why - and I wondered why Mother looked so white and wouldn't open her eyes. And I leaned down and touched her cheek - and oh, it was so cold. It made me shiver. And somebody in the room said, 'Poor little thing!' and I was frightened and put my face down on your shoulder. (*ENM* 16)

In these first few chapters, and indeed throughout the novel, Montgomery gives to Emily her most intimate thoughts and personal experiences. To create a realistic picture of Emily, Montgomery includes in her characterization the things that she believed defined her own character the most - her reading material, her moment of creative inspiration, and her experiences as an orphan. Since Montgomery was rereading the passages in her journal that deal with these issues while she was writing *Emily of New Moon*, it becomes clear that Montgomery is writing Emily as she reads her self. Emily

becomes Montgomery's projection of her own self as imagined and inspired by her journals.

From the beginning of the novel, Emily is described in language that connotes strength of character. Montgomery goes to great lengths to convey the power of Emily's personality. When the housekeeper, Ellen Greene, tells Emily that she is not of much importance, Emily responds proudly with the self-assertive statement, "'I am of importance to myself.'" (*ENM*, 21) She is described by the narrator as "a slight, black, indomitable little figure." (*ENM* 28) Even her autocratic Aunt Elizabeth feels almost humbled by Emily's cool composure and self-assurance.

> Elizabeth Murray would not have felt "put about" before King or Governor-General. The Murray pride would have carried her through there; but she did feel disturbed in the presence of this alien, level-gazing child who had already shown that she was anything but meek and humble. (*ENM* 28)

Emily is also portrayed as a solitary figure, fighting her own battle among strangers. When Emily's fate is to be decided, the Murray family gathers around a table in the sitting-room. Unbeknownst to them, Emily is sitting under the table hidden by a table-cloth, determined to hear her destiny debated. This image of the powerless child surrounded by uncaring, unsympathetic adults conveys the sense that Emily is an outsider, that she is different and set apart from her closest kin. Indeed, Montgomery uses adjectives such as "alien" (*ENM* 28) and "interloper" (*ENM* 59) to communicate Emily's status as "other."

These characteristics which Montgomery bestows on Emily are in keeping with common conceptions of the artist. Indeed, Montgomery is following the pattern of the

künstlerroman. C. Hugh Holman's *A Handbook to Literature* defines the *künstlerroman* as

> A form of the apprenticeship novel in which the protagonist is an artist of some sort who struggles from childhood to maturity against an inhospitable environment and within himself toward an understanding of his creative mission.[42]

Emily fits well into this pattern. She is an outsider within the Murray family [As Aunt Elizabeth says, disapprovingly, "'She is not a Murray, that is plain to be seen.'" (*ENM* 29)], and she is an outsider in Blair Water, the community to which she is brought to live. On Emily's first day of school, Emily finds herself alone among a sea of unfriendly faces. Once again, Emily is referred to as an "interloper."

> Emily was a stranger and one of the proud Murrays - two counts against her. And there was about her, small and ginghamed and sunbonneted as she was, a certain reserve and dignity and fineness that they resented. And they resented the level way she looked at them, with that disdainful face under cloudy black hair, instead of being shy and drooping as became an interloper on probation. (*ENM*, 79)

Emily is interrogated on whether she can sing, dance, sew, knit lace, or crochet. Emily confesses ignorance of all these feminine accomplishments. Instead, she announces triumphantly that she can write poetry, an accomplishment portrayed as far superior to the skills mentioned by her schoolmates. Up to this point, Emily has not written a line of poetry.

> At that instant she knew she *could* write poetry. And with this queer, unreasonable conviction came - the flash! Right there, surrounded by hostility and suspicion, fighting alone for her standing without backing or advantage, came the wonderful moment when soul seemed to cast aside

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[42] C. Hugh Holman & William Harmon, *A Handbook to Literature*, 5th ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1986) 271.

the bonds of flesh and spring upward to the stars. (*ENM*, 80)

It is apparent from these passages that Emily is very different from the other girls her age. By mentioning and then rejecting the various feminine accomplishments of knitting, cooking, etc., Montgomery makes it very clear that Emily will challenge the gender expectations of her society. Her writing will be her most important accomplishment.

In her study of Montgomery's work, Elizabeth Epperly writes of the *Emily* series,

> To draw this portrait of the artist as a young girl and woman, Montgomery had to explore thoroughly her own thoughts about writing and the female as artist. Montgomery had to come to terms...with forces that shape and thwart the female who aspires: tradition, established sex-roles, male and female gatekeepers for the establishment, and conventional romance. Emily's is a passionate struggle for voice as well as a...record of Montgomery's own ambivalent battles with autonomy and conformity.[43]

Montgomery was exploring these thoughts by means of her journal. At the time that she was constructing Emily's life, she was reconstructing her own reality. It is unfortunate that Montgomery burned her earliest journals for we have only her memories of her childhood to refer to. However, the journals that did survive from Montgomery's youth do not portray an individual in conflict with her society. What these early entries do portray is a happy, carefree girl with many friends. Moreover, the childhood memories that she does recall in the early years, conform to this image of happiness. When Montgomery was seven years old, two orphan boys, David and Wellington Nelson, came to board in the MacNeill household and stayed for three years. The boys were Montgomery's age and became her playmates. Montgomery recorded with obvious

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[43] Elizabeth Rollins Epperly, *The Fragrance of Sweet-Grass: L.M. Montgomery's Heroines and the Pursuit of Romance* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) 145.

enjoyment the memories she had of their happy life together. As Montgomery increasingly drew her identity from her writing and realized the literary value of her journals, she began to reconstruct her childhood memories. It is then that she started to characterize herself as a solitary child in a hostile environment. This is not to say that such a characterization is entirely false. As Montgomery began to achieve success in her field she became more introspective. She felt it was important to delve into her own psychology and to come to understand her own character formation. Moreover, Ewan's mental illness led her to study psychology. In the introduction to v.III of the *Selected Journals*, the editors write,

> L.M. Montgomery had long been interested in Freudian theories: she read intensely in psychiatric and medical texts, acting as amateur psychologist regarding her husband's case. (*SJ* III, xi)

Montgomery undoubtedly applied her new knowledge to herself. Her deep introspection and understanding of psychology was useful when she wrote *Emily of New Moon*. Montgomery wanted Emily to be different from her other characters. With Emily she wanted to create "a psychological study of one human being's life." (*SJ* II, 390; Aug. 24, 1920) I would argue that *Emily of New Moon* is a psychological study of Montgomery's own life.

Family, heritage and tradition were very important to Montgomery. She took pride in her family history and began her official biography, *The Alpine Path*, with the story of her ancestors. Accordingly, New Moon is steeped in family tradition. Candlelight, sanded floors, the old-fashioned dairy are all family traditions in which Emily delights and takes pride. Montgomery gives to Emily her own family history. The story of the

Murrays coming to New Moon is really the story of the Montgomerys' arrival in P.E.I. The story of Elizabeth Burnley, who would not take off her bonnet because she was homesick, is also a story from Montgomery's family history. These and other stories are retold in *Emily of New Moon* in order to provide a background of respectability and nobility. Emily constructs her identity through her heritage. She takes pride in her ancestry, and this pride becomes a source of power for her. At the same time, however, this same ancestry is one of the barriers to her development as an independent woman and a writer. Many of the New Moon traditions conspire to keep women in their proper sphere. From the beginning, Emily is anxious to be "grown-up" so that she can earn her own living and be independent. It is not, however, a "Murray tradition" for women to work outside the house. As Aunt Elizabeth informs Emily,

> "The Murray women have never been under any necessity for earning their own living. All we require of you is to be a good and contented child and to conduct yourself with becoming prudence and modesty." (*ENM*, 59)

The house itself symbolizes domesticity.

> There was a certain charm about the old house which Emily felt keenly and responded to, although she was too young to understand it. It was a house which aforetime had had vivid brides and mothers and wives, and the atmosphere of their loves and lives still hung around it, not yet banished by the old-maidishness of the régime of Elizabeth and Laura. (*ENM*, 61)

This feminine atmosphere, however, is tempered by the subtle presence of deceased patriarchs. Archibald Murray's spirit lives on in his daughter Elizabeth, who is very much like her father, "the handsome, intolerant, autocratic old man who had ruled his family with a rod of iron." (*ENM* 58) His picture in the parlour is a reminder that New Moon is immersed in patriarchal tradition. Emily senses his power and recoils from it.

> "I am afraid of the parlour. All the walls are hung over with pictures of our ancestors and there is not one goodlooking person among them except Grand-father Murray who looks handsome but very cross." (*ENM*, 98)

When Emily is locked in the spare room as a punishment for going barefoot, another portrait of Archibald Murray so terrifies her that she escapes out the window and down a ladder.

> A beam of sunlight struck through a small break in one of the slats of the blind and fell directly athwart the picture of Grandfather Murray hanging over the mantle-piece...In that gleam of light his face seemed veritably to leap out of the gloom at Emily with its grim frown strangely exaggerated. (*ENM*, 111)

The powerful presence of Archibald Murray also lives on in the unlikely character of Emily. While Aunt Elizabeth can be seen as a replica of her father to a certain degree, Emily too has access to the power and authority that he represents. In the chapter entitled "Growing Pains," Aunt Elizabeth decides that she is going to cut off Emily's hair, to "shingle" it close to her head for the summer. Emily's objections and pleas make no impression upon Aunt Elizabeth until the suggestive click of the scissors awakens a deep force of power in Emily's being.

> That click, as if by magic, seemed to loosen something - some strange formidable power in Emily's soul. She turned deliberately around and faced her aunt. She felt her brows drawing together in an unaccustomed way - she felt an uprush as from unknown depths of some irresistible surge of energy."Aunt Elizabeth," she said, looking straight at the lady with the scissors, "*my hair is not going to be cut off.* Let me hear no more of this." (*ENM* 206-7)

Aunt Elizabeth drops the scissors and flees from the room in horror. She tells her sister Laura, "'I saw - Father - looking from her face.'" (*ENM* 207) The incident shows that Emily draws her strength and authority from her ancestors. However, it also reveals that

power and authority are not the privilege of men alone. In fact, many of Emily's battles will be waged against powerful women, not men. Many of her struggles will be internal. Rubio and Waterston, in their short biography of Montgomery, comment on this struggle.

> The Emily series probes deep into a child's conflict with an authoritarian social structure that fails to fulfil her psychological needs. Emily is a female artist enduring the negative pressures arising in the late nineteenth century, pressures based on the notion that art was frivolous and that a young woman ought at any rate to marry and subordinate her ambitions to those of her husband.[44]

This conflict is symbolized by Emily's two separate identities - the Starr and the Murray. Emily inherits her most independent qualities from her Starr ancestry. Her artistic temperament is symbolized by her Starr identity. Like her father, Emily could defy societal norms and retreat into a solitary world of the imagination. It is through her father that she inherits her talent with words, her love of nature and her gift of unique vision. The Murray blood also runs deeply through Emily. From the Murrays Emily inherits her fierce pride, her love of tradition and her desire for propriety. Commentary on Emily's conflicting identities runs throughout the novel. Whenever Emily does something unworthy of her Murray heritage, Aunt Elizabeth is wont to say, "'There's the Starr blood coming out.'" (*ENM* 40) Emily herself tries to deny her Murray identity. When Cousin Jimmy observes that "'The Starr is only skin deep with you,'" Emily protests that she is *"all* Starr." (*ENM*, 46) Her Murray identity, symbolized by Aunt Elizabeth, threatens to subdue the Starr in Emily. When she arrives at New Moon, Emily is forced to sleep in Aunt Elizabeth's room. The room, suffused as it is with Elizabeth's

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[44] Rubio & Waterston, *Writing a life*, 74-6.

personality, suppresses Emily's own identity.

> They went up to Aunt Elizabeth's big, sombre bedroom where there was dark, grim wallpaper..., a high black bureau, topped with a tiny swing-mirror, so far above her that there could be no Emily-in-the-glass, tightly closed windows with dark green curtains, a high bedstead with a dark-green canopy, and a huge, fat, smothering featherbed, with high hard pillows. (*ENM* 55-56)

The adjectives used to describe the bedroom reflect qualities in Elizabeth's personality: sombre, dark, grim, tightly closed, hard. Emily cannot find herself in this room. The mirror, which symbolizes her identity, is too high for her to reach. The bed threatens to smother her. While Emily will never inherit these extreme Murray qualities, the reader is warned that Emily will have to fight to retain her Starr identity. There are hints throughout the novel that Emily is not as different from Aunt Elizabeth as she seems to be. In one instance, when Emily sees Aunt Ruth's floral pillow covering the glass of her father's casket, Emily is seen to physically resemble Elizabeth. "Emily, with a tightening of the lips that gave her face an odd resemblance to Aunt Elizabeth, lifted up the pillow and set it on the floor." (*ENM*, 33) It is clear, then, that though Starr and Murray are opposing forces in Emily's personality, they are equally strong. Emily will have to learn to negotiate these opposing forces. If she allows the Murray to conquer the Starr, her unique individuality will be diminished. She must fight against the powerful force of Murray propriety and decorum to retain her Starr individualism and vision.

Montgomery recognized the same conflict within herself. In the first volume of her *Journals*, Montgomery commented on the opposing impulses within her personality.

> I have a very uncomfortable blend in my make-up - the passionate Montgomery blood and the Puritan Macneill conscience. Neither is strong enough wholly to control the other. (*SJ* I, 213; Apr. 8, 1898)

Thomas Tausky, in an analysis of the *Emily* trilogy, makes a similar observation.

> Like her creator, Emily seems half-Victorian, half-modern, half-submissive, half-self-sufficient, half the socially acceptable public mask, half the intensely private creative personality.[45]

Emily's divided self, like that of Montgomery, is never really resolved. In fact, Montgomery projects this conflict of self on Emily's story as well as on Emily's character. It is difficult to discern, at times, whether it is Emily's or Montgomery's "uncomfortable blend in [her] make-up" that drives the narrative which eventually leads Emily down the path of marriage and domesticity.

Emily's friend "Ilse" is an incarnation of "the passionate Montgomery blood." She is, according to Rubio and Waterston in *Writing a Life*, "an anarchic double who acts out her dreams of freedom from restraint instead of sublimating them, as Emily and her creator did, in creative writing."[46] Ilse is unlike any other character in Montgomery's fictional worlds. She is a motherless girl of eleven when the reader meets her. Because she is neglected by her father, Ilse does not live by any rules or conventions. She is allowed to do as she pleases. Ian Menzies sees Ilse as an expression of repressed female anger. She is made to suffer by her father because of the alleged sins of her mother. Montgomery projects many of her anxieties about gender expectations onto the character of Ilse.

> Perhaps because the trilogy is autobiographical, Montgomery assigns Emily's sexuality and exuberance, the unchecked spirit poured into a

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[45] Thomas E. Tausky, "L.M. Montgomery and 'The Alpine Path, so hard, so steep,'" *Canadian Children's Literature* 33 (1983): 18.

[46] Rubio & Waterston, *Writing a Life*, 76.

> Presbyterian mould, to the companion character Ilse. By separating assertiveness and anger from Emily, and presenting these in the androgynous Ilse, Montgomery is able to explore expressions and actions that would otherwise be unacceptable to her readership.[47]

Ilse does not conform to gender norms. She is called a "tomboy." (*ENM*, 85) She takes Emily fishing and gathers worms for the bait. She does not believe in God. She flies into tempers in which she hurls abuse at Emily or whoever happens to be the subject of her wrath. Emily, unlike Ilse, does not "call names" because it is "unladylike." (*ENM* 126) Ilse is quite definitely "unladylike." However, she is not condemned by either the narrator or her peers for her refusal to conform to gender expectations. The reader, and by extension the narrator, delights in Ilse's abandonment of conformity and propriety. She is a free spirit whose personality is an exhilarating relief from the common personalities that inhabit Blair Water.

Emily's writing is, of course, the central conflict in the novels. At the beginning of the *Emily of New Moon,* Emily is driven to burn her "account book," a book in which she records thoughts and feelings and descriptions, when Aunt Elizabeth demands to see it. When she first arrives at New Moon, Emily is deprived of writing material.

> Writing paper of any kind was scarce at New Moon. Letters were seldom written, and when they were a sheet of note paper sufficed. Emily dared not ask Aunt Elizabeth for any. (*ENM* 89-90)

Eventually, Emily does find paper - "letter-bills" from the post-office which were blank on one side - the very same writing material that Montgomery used when she was Emily's age. Emily's possession of these letter-bills, however, must be kept a secret from

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[47] Ian Menzies, "The moral of the rose: L.M. Montgomery's Emily," *Canadian Children's Literature* 65 (1992): 48-9.

Aunt Elizabeth, to whom writing for any other than utilitarian purposes is not a proper occupation for a girl.

Emily uses the letter-bills to write letters to her father "on the road to heaven." These letters serve the same purpose as a diary, and the reader is allowed glimpses into Emily's private thoughts. It is revealing that Montgomery would choose to use this device to provide insight into Emily's character. Montgomery's thoughts on her own diary and the purpose it served are brought to the reader's attention. Montgomery seems to be saying that the diary is necessary in order to acquire the proper understanding of the imaginative mind of the artist. At the same time, she is calling attention to her own private writing and, in doing so, identifying Emily's writing with her own. As Montgomery offers Emily's journal as an interpretive tool toward the understanding of Emily as artist, so we might see the *Emily* trilogy as an interpretive tool towards understanding the imaginative mind of Montgomery.

Emily's diary also allows the reader a glimpse into Montgomery's own writing process, something we are never privileged to observe in Montgomery's own journals. We see the writer inspired, the flow of words, the hand racing across the page in an effort to keep pace with the imagination.

> In the recess of the dormer window she crouched - breathlessly she selected a letter-bill and extracted a lead pencil from her pocket. An old sheet of cardboard served as a desk; she began to write feverishly...she poured out her tale of the day - of her rapture and her pain - writing heedlessly and intently until the sunset faded into dim, star-litten twilight. The chickens went unfed - Cousin Jimmy had to go himself for the cows - Saucy Sal got no new milk - Aunt Laura had to wash the dishes - what mattered it? Emily, in the delightful throes of literary composition, was lost to all worldly things. (*ENM* 93)

As with Montgomery's journals, Emily's writing serves as therapy to a troubled mind.

> When she had covered the back of four letter-bills she could see to write no more. But she had emptied out her soul and it was once more free from evil passions. (*ENM* 93)

Through her use of both narrative and journal entries, Montgomery draws the reader's attention to the fact that Emily's journals do not tell the whole story. If they did, there would be no need of a narrator. The reader who is studying the novels and journals intertextually observes that Montgomery's journals do not tell the whole story either. They represent only part of the truth of Montgomery's life, only one of many possible interpretations. There will always be incidents or feelings or observations that are left out, whether deliberately to support one specific interpretation of events, or unconsciously because they seem insignificant to the author. In Emily's case, her letters to her father are filled with criticism of her Aunt Elizabeth. What is left out of the letters is Elizabeth's generosity in giving Emily a home. When Elizabeth reads the letters she is confronted with a very one-dimensional interpretation of her character. Emily recognizes the unfairness of her portrayal of Aunt Elizabeth. In an effort to correct her characterization, Emily goes through her letters, adding "explanatory footnote[s] saying that [she] was mistaken." (*ENM* 314)

Throughout the trilogy the reader is reminded of the restraints placed on Emily's writing because she is female. Language is a central issue. Emily must negotiate between her desire to use expressive words and her status as a "lady" and a Murray of New Moon. Emily learns quickly that some words are off-limits to her because of her gender.

> "Aunt Laura says I must be careful not to pick up the words Ilse uses and try to set her a good example because the poor child has no one to look

> after her propperly (sic). I wish I could use some of her words because they are so striking...I think my aunts are too perticular (sic)." (*ENM* 126-7)

Emily discovers that it is improper to talk about having children. (*ENM* 131) Later, she horrifies her aunts by declaring, "'I *hate* that dod-gasted Lofty John.'" (*ENM* 139) When Emily protests that she has heard her Cousin Jimmy use the same expression, she is taught a little lesson in proper female behaviour. Elizabeth explains that, "'your cousin Jimmy is a man - and men sometimes use expressions, in the heat of anger, that are not proper for little girls.'" (*ENM* 140) Emily relates that Aunt Elizabeth has banished the word "bull" from her vocabulary, undoubtedly because of its sexual connotations. The narrator makes a sly commentary on the limits imposed upon Emily's vocabulary when Emily comes face to face with a bull.

> Emily, obedient to Aunt Elizabeth's command, had eliminated the word "bull" from her vocabulary. But to ignore the existence of bulls was not to do away with them. (*ENM* 148)

By placing restrictions on Emily's vocabulary, Elizabeth is trying to deny the existence of a reality that she thinks is not the proper sphere for women. She is trying to put blinders on Emily, to limit Emily's knowledge of the world to the narrow confines of her own morality.

An episode in which Emily eats a "poisoned" apple that her neighbour, Lofty John, supposedly left out for the rats also acts as a metaphor for the limitations imposed on Emily's knowledge of the world. Montgomery invokes the biblical story of Adam and Eve in her chapter "A Daughter of Eve." Emily, like the mythical Eve, thirsts for knowledge. And like Eve, Emily will be punished for striving after knowledge.

New Moon abounds with apples, and Emily is allowed to eat as many as she pleases. "There was no taboo on any apple and Emily was free to eat all she wanted of each and every kind." (*ENM* 132) If we read the apple as a symbol of knowledge, we can interpret the above sentence to mean that a world of knowledge was open to Emily. The limits of this world, however, are the limits of the New Moon property. "Emily knew quite well that she should not be going to Lofty John's at all." (*ENM* 133) Not being satisfied with New Moon apples alone, Emily also eats the apples of her neighbour, Lofty John. Finding the very apple that she desires, a "sweet" on one of the steps of Lofty John's workshop, Emily eats it happily. Lofty John, as a joke, tells Emily that he had poisoned the apple for the rats and that she will undoubtedly die. Emily, thinking that she is on her deathbed, writes a letter to Ilse in which she tells Ilse, "'Don't let anybody do anything to Lofty John because he did not mean to poison me and it was all my own fault for being so greedy.'" (*ENM* 137) This episode can be read as a metaphor for the price that Emily has to pay when she transgresses the boundaries that her society has set for women. Lofty John, a symbol of patriarchal society, punishes Emily with the threat of death. Emily learns that she must not be so "greedy." Her desire for knowledge, symbolized by the apple, becomes a vice instead of a virtue. With this chapter, Montgomery calls to the reader's attention the forces against which Emily must fight in order to gain access to a world beyond the traditional, proper world of New Moon.

Towards the end of the novel the character of Dean Priest is introduced. Dean Priest will develop into a central character in the remainder of the trilogy and will become a symbol for the barriers that are placed before Emily's ambitions. Emily is

warned about Dean before she even meets him. Jock Kelly, driving Emily to Priest Pond to visit her aunt, tells Emily never to marry a Priest. "'They're ill to marry - ill to live with. The wives die young.'" (*ENM* 236) It is significant that Montgomery chose the name "Priest" for this particular character. Elizabeth Epperly, in an examination of Montgomery's manuscripts, observes that Dean was originally given the surname "Temple."[48] Montgomery's use of the name "Priest" not only bestows authority and power upon Dean; it also calls to mind Montgomery's own marriage to a minister. Jock Kelly's warning to never marry a Priest takes on a special significance when read in this context.

In the chapter in which Dean is introduced, Emily is perched precariously on the rocky banks of the shore. She has ventured to the edge of the bank, lured there by a beautiful aster when the soil beneath her feet gives way and she nearly falls to her death. It is in this dangerous situation that Dean finds her and from which he ultimately rescues her. Although Dean is superficially shown as a saviour here, the danger of the situation in which Emily and Dean meet foreshadows the danger that Dean's friendship will present to Emily's identity. It is noteworthy that earlier in the novel Emily is saved from a charging bull by the choreboy, Perry Miller. In that situation, when Emily thanks Perry for saving her, Perry shrugs off his heroic act. Dean, on the other hand, claims ownership of Emily in return for saving her life. He tells Emily, "'Your life belongs to me henceforth. Since I saved it it's mine. Never forget that.'" (*ENM* 271) Observing

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[48] Elizabeth Rollins Epperly, "Approaching the Montgomery Manuscripts," *Harvesting Thistles*, 77.

Emily's reaction, Dean continues,

> That doesn't quite suit you? Ah, you see one pays a penalty when one reaches out for something beyond the ordinary. Take your wonderful aster home and keep it as long as you can. It has cost you your freedom. (*ENM* 271)

Again, the reader is reminded that whenever Emily strives for something just out of reach, she must suffer the consequences. Emily rebels openly against Dean's claim.

> 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. (*ENM* 271)

The "cobweb fetter" is a powerful image. Emily, confronted by Dean's claim of ownership, feels like a fly trapped in a spider's web. Dean, then, is the predatory spider. When Emily sets her foot on the flower, she is challenging Dean's claim. Elizabeth Epperly calls Emily's action "the most important gesture in all three of the Emily books - instinctively Emily fights against the power that wants to dominate her."[49] Despite Emily's distaste for Dean's claim of ownership, she finds a friend in Dean. He will become her mentor. She will turn to him for confirmation of her abilities and will increasingly rely on his opinion of her work. Dean's claim to ownership, then, is not merely the joke that Emily believes it to be. Because Emily holds his opinion in such high esteem, Dean is granted a great degree of control over Emily's life. We will see in the next two novels how he exercises this control.

This first novel in the *Emily* trilogy is the most radical of the three. As a child, Emily is allowed to transgress the limits of her society without much censure. Gender

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[49] Epperly, *Fragrance of Sweetgrass*, 162-3.

roles, although certainly present, are not as strict for a girl of eleven as they will be for a woman. At this stage in her development, Emily can still assert her individuality and independence. Marriage is not an issue in this first novel. When Emily imagines her future, she is able to imagine herself as an independent woman earning her own way in life. At one point in the novel, Emily writes to her father, "'When I grow up and write a great novel and make lots of money, I will buy the Disappointed House [the house that will eventually symbolize Emily's ultimate surrender to female convention and domesticity]." (*ENM*, 213) Emily's future as an independent woman ends with this first novel. Marie Campbell points out that "Childhood...is the only time of her life during which a woman is permitted not to know that her reality involves marriage."[50] In the next two novels, the reader will see how romance and societal conventions begin to compete with Emily's ambition. The following novels illustrate Montgomery's own ambivalence about women's proper role in society.

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[50] Marie Campbell, "Wedding Bells and Death Knells: The Writer as Bride in the *Emily* Trilogy," *Harvesting Thistles*, 142.

Chapter 3

Questing Hero or Passive Heroine: *Emily Climbs*

It was with regret that L.M. Montgomery laid down her pen at the completion of *Emily of New Moon*. She confided to her journal,

> Today I finished *Emily of New Moon*, after six months writing. It is the best book I have ever written - and I have had more intense pleasure in writing it than any of the others - not even excepting *Green Gables*. I have *lived* it, and I hated to pen the last line and write *finis*. (*SJ* III, 39: Feb. 15, 1922)

Of course, Montgomery still had two more Emily books to write, but she did not look forward to these. She feared that they would be "more or less hackwork." (SJ III 39; Feb. 15, 1922) The next book in the series, *Emily Climbs*, in which Emily becomes a precocious teenager attending high school in nearby Shrewsbury, presented specific problems to her. She explained to her long-time correspondent, George Boyd MacMillan

> The second volume of a series, especially if it deals with a very young girl, is the hardest for me to write - because the public and publisher won't allow me to write of a young girl as she really is. One can write of children as they are; so my books about children are always good; but when you come to write of the 'miss' you have to depict a sweet insipid young thing - really a child grown older - to whom the basic realities of life and reactions to them are quite unknown. *Love* must be scarcely hinted at - yet young girls often have some very vivid love affairs. A girl of *Emily's* type certainly would. But the public - One of the Vanderbilts once said 'Damn the public.'...I can't afford to damn the public. I must cater to it for awhile yet.[51]

Montgomery blamed her reluctance to write about the adolescent Emily on her publisher

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[51] L.M. Montgomery, *My Dear Mr. M: Letters to G.B. MacMillan*, ed. Francis W.P. Bolger & Elizabeth R. Epperly (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1980) 118.

and reading public. This reluctance, however, can also be accounted for by Montgomery's own need to retreat into the past in order to make her present difficulties more liveable. Montgomery's joy in writing *Emily of New Moon* was parallelled by the joy she derived in revisiting her own past via her journals. Montgomery was always looking back to her childhood with a feeling of regret and loss. Even at the young age of 21, she expressed "a strong longing...to go to those dear old merry days when life was seen through a rosy mist of hope and illusion and possessed an indefinable something that has passed away forever." (*SJ* I, 161; May 5, 1896) Likewise, even back then, Montgomery looked to her future with fear. On April 12, 1903, she wrote in her journal,

> Life will just go on getting a little harder for me every year. I am practically alone in the world. Soon youth will be gone and I shall have to face a drab, solitary, struggling middle age. It is not a pleasant prospect. (*SJ* I, 287)

Although this fear was related to Montgomery's anxieties about remaining unmarried, her life as a minister's wife did not brighten her future greatly. As if to fulfil her own prophecy, Montgomery recorded in her journal, almost every new year, her terror of the upcoming year. As the years passed, she sank deeper and deeper into a fatalism in which there was no hope for happiness in her future.

> Nineteen twenty-five! I shrink back from it. Another year of misery? I have lost the power to hope for anything else. I actually cringed when anyone wished me 'a happy New Year.' It seems such an impossible thing.[52]

It is not surprising, then, that Montgomery should wish to keep Emily in a state of perpetual childhood. For Montgomery, childhood symbolized the only time of freedom

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[52] Montgomery, *Journals of L.M. Montgomery* (Jan.1, 1925).

in a woman's life. Emily's passage into womanhood meant the surrender of her freedom. As a woman she must learn to conform to societal and gender expectations. And ultimately, Emily must marry. Her evolution from child to woman must have symbolized the sense of loss that Montgomery felt about her own childhood.

As she wrote the Emily trilogy, Montgomery's frustrations with her marriage began to weigh more heavily on her. Ewan's attacks of depression continued to oppress her. His complete lack of sympathy or interest in her work was like a slap in the face to her when she wore herself out trying to juggle the responsibilities of wife and mother with her writing. She began to complain about Ewan's general attitudes to women.

> Ewan's attitude to women...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. (*SJ* III, 48; Mar. 25, 1922)

Trapped in an unsympathetic relationship with her husband, Montgomery's only release from her present pain was the time travel she engaged in by means of her journal and her fiction.

The beginning of *Emily Climbs* reflects this longing for the past. The repetition of the words "old," "olden," and "old-time" suggests a nostalgia for better times: "the olden years before the world turned upside down."[53] Even the snow tries to arrest the passage of time by "drift[ing] the sun-dial over completely." (*EC*, 2) Emily is still headstrong, independent and creative. In the first chapter, she declares to her diary, "'I

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[53] L.M. Montgomery, *Emily Climbs* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, Limited, 1925) 2. Hereafter, all references to *Emily Climbs* will be referred to parenthetically, within the text as *EC*.

have made up my mind that I will never marry. I shall be *wedded to my art.*'" (*EC* 5) Emily recognizes that art and love are not necessarily compatible. She seems to recognize that a choice must be made between the two. Despite this recognition, love and romance manage to find Emily, and by the end of the book, although Emily is still free, the reader recognizes the inevitability of her eventual marriage and surrender to convention.

Montgomery and Emily both struggle against convention and tradition. The conflict of the traditional female role versus the creative life of the writer, a conflict Emily experiences in the external world, is also an internal conflict. Emily tells her Cousin Jimmy that she hates convention (*EC* 234). She believes that she is like "Kipling's cat."

> I walk by my wild lone and wave my wild tail where so it pleases me. That's why the Murrays look askance at me. They think I should only run with the pack. (*EC* 86)

Emily's individualism, however, is countered by her conventionalism. She does care what people think, even though she tells Cousin Jimmy that she hates "to go mincing through life, afraid to take a single long step for fear somebody is watching me." (EC 233-234) Her friend Ilse is more like Kipling's cat than Emily. When Ilse is summoned to the principal's office to be chastised for walking home with a boy, she snatches up a vase of chrysanthemums and smashes it against the wall. Emily's reaction is superior and condescending. "'I scolded [Ilse] roundly. Really, somebody *has* to bring Ilse up and nobody but me seems to feel any responsibility in the matter.'" (EC 104) Later, Emily interrogates Ilse about her choice of male companions. Ilse reacts angrily. "'Now, don't make me mad, Emily!...You're getting too smug - something ought to be done to cure

you before it gets chronic. I hate prunes and prisms.'" (EC 118) The influence of Emily's Murray upbringing works against her Starr individualism. Montgomery herself was engaged in an ongoing battle with her own conventionalism. It is Montgomery's fear of straying from cultural standards that prevents Emily from fully acting out her individualism.

It is interesting that Montgomery should have said to George Boyd MacMillan, about *Emily Climbs*, that "love must be scarcely hinted at." Love is more than hinted at in *Emily Climbs*. In fact, it might be argued that one of the themes of this novel is the conflict of love and art. Although this theme will be further developed in the third book, *Emily's Quest*, it is certainly present in *Emily Climbs*. Emily's artist friend, Teddy Kent, and her mentor, Dean Priest, are the two men who vie for Emily's attention and affection. In the first chapter, Emily leaves Dean, with whom she had been reading *The Alhambra*, to go to Teddy, who has whistled for her. Dean reacts with bitterness and jealousy. In the same chapter, Emily records in her diary that Dean has been trying to photograph her but that the result never satisfies him. Recognizing the significance of his attempts to capture Emily on film, Dean says to Emily,

> "Tell that young imp of a Teddy Kent to keep your face out of his pictures. He has no business to put *you* in every one he draws...He's got *something* of you in every picture...your eyes - the curve of your neck - the tilt of your head - your personality. That's the worst - I don't mind your eyes and curves so much, but I won't have that cub putting a bit of your soul into everything he draws...let him keep his pencil and brush off *my* property." (*EC* 29)

Both Dean and Teddy are trying to capture Emily, to hold her image and essence for their own enjoyment. Teddy, however, with his artistic eye and deeper understanding of

Emily's true nature, has more luck than Dean, and Dean realizes the significance of Teddy's success.

Emily's self-development is dependent upon the entry of romance into her life. This is made clear in the third chapter, "In the Watches of the Night," in which Emily, so the narrator informs us, "passed from childhood into girlhood." (*EC* 35) In this chapter, Montgomery seems to have succumbed to what Helen Buss calls "the stereotypical ways of placing men at the centre of [women's] self-development."[54] Emily is trapped in the church one evening after prayer-meeting, having run in to retrieve a bit of paper on which she had been writing her impressions of people from the congregation. While she is searching for her paper, the caretaker locks the door, trapping Emily inside. She thinks that she is alone but soon realizes that "Mad Mr. Morrison," the village madman, the inconsolable lover seeking his dead wife, is with her. "Mad Mr. Morrison" signifies the intrusion of romance into Emily's life. He is, despite Emily's terror, a romantic symbol. A storm rages outside, "one of the worst storms in Blair Water annals," (*EC* 42) signalling the great change that Emily's life will undergo. From this point forward, Emily's life is destined to follow an inexorable romantic script. In this chapter, she plays the heroine in distress awaiting rescue from her hero.

> Oh, what a chapter for her diary...and, beyond it, for that novel she would write some day! It was a situation expressly shaped for the heroine - who must, of course, be rescued by the hero. (*EC* 45)

True to the romantic script, Emily is rescued by Teddy, who has heard her cries from a mile away. He takes her out to the graveyard, where he tells her,

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[54] Buss, "Decoding L.M. Montgomery's Journals," 91.

"'Emily...you're the sweetest girl in the world.'" (*EC* 52) At this point, the intrusive narrator appears to comment upon these words of Teddy and addresses the following question to the reader: "Madam, whoever you are, and however old you are, be honest, and admit that the first time you heard those words on the lips of some shy sweetheart, was the great moment of your life." (*EC* 52) The reader has already been warned at the beginning of the chapter that the events to follow will be life-changing for Emily. "Some of us can recall the exact time in which we reached certain milestones on life's road." (*EC* 35) Emily's great moment, which the reader might reasonably have expected to be connected with her writing, is, instead, caused by a few complimentary words from a boy. Emily has become the subject of romance. She has been transformed suddenly from questing hero to passive heroine.

The chapter might be read simply as a romantic interlude in Emily's life. However, there are several hazard signs warning that the chapter should be read more carefully. Mad Mr. Morrison himself is one such hazard sign. Although a romantic figure, he is the victim of thwarted love. He has been driven to madness and restlessness by his love. Mrs. Kent, Teddy's mother who catches Emily and Teddy "spooning" in the graveyard, is another symbol of love gone wrong (and perhaps, as Teddy's mother, an image of what Emily might become). Finally, the setting chosen for Emily and Teddy's romantic vigil is itself significant. Montgomery calls attention to its significance, referring to "the brief little moonlit idyll in the graveyard - of all places for an idyll!" (*EC* 57) These hazards seem to act against the straightforward romance of the chapter, warning the reader that love and romance can result in insanity and death. While Montgomery

employs romantic conventions to document Emily's self-development, she writes against these conventions by placing negative references to romance in her story. Marie Campbell argues that throughout the Emily trilogy "Montgomery provides her reader with whispered hints that marriage is, in fact, tantamount to death for the female 'artist in words.'"[55] These "whispered hints" are in abundance in this chapter.

In this novel, Dean Priest begins a transformation from supportive mentor to jealous lover. In the first novel, Dean had encouraged Emily in her writing. He would read her poems and stories and offer her helpful criticism and suggestions. In *Emily Climbs*, Dean begins to see Emily's writing as a rival, a threat to his own standing in her life. Emily recognizes his feelings of jealousy but does not realize their full significance.

> I think in a way Dean doesn't like to think of my growing up - I *think* he has a little of the Priest jealousy of sharing *anything*, especially friendship, with any one else - or with the world. I feel thrown back on myself. Somehow, it has seemed to me lately that Dean isn't interested any longer in my writing ambitions. He even, it seems to me, ridicules them slightly. (*EC* 203)

Although Emily senses Dean's jealousy, she fails to connect it to his attitude toward her writing. Emily trusts Dean's judgement implicitly. "'Dean is so clever and knows so much.'" (*EC* 204) For Emily, Dean represents knowledge, the unknown, an exotic world far away and radically different from that of New Moon. He is different from any of her other friends because he has seen so much more of the world. His vision extends far beyond the shores of Prince Edward Island. Because of his vast knowledge and experience, Emily cannot doubt his judgement. Elizabeth Epperly makes the following

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[55] Campbell, Marie. "Wedding Bells and Death Knells: The Writer as Bride in the *Emily* Trilogy." *Harvesting Thistles*, 138.

observations about Emily's relationship with Dean Priest.

> For Emily's struggle to have meaning, Dean Priest must be sublime and authoritative as well as crushingly condescending...If Emily succumbs to Dean's authoritative, flattering entreaty, she will consign herself to silence or to mimicry of his male voice. In struggling against him, Emily Starr is fighting against the collective weight of male privilege and authority. Emily's apparent love struggle with Dean Priest is nothing less than the female writer's fight for survival.[56]

Dean scorns Emily's writing ambitions and feels bitterness at the prospect of her growing older and wiser. His admiration of her begins to centre on her physical beauty. He tells Emily,

> "Your skin is like a narcissus petal. You could dare to hold a white rose against your face - very few women can dare that. You aren't really very pretty, you know, Star, but your face makes people think of beautiful things - and that is a far rarer gift than mere beauty." (*EC* 207)

By denigrating Emily's writing and praising her physical beauty, Dean is invoking a male tradition in which a woman's greatest virtue is her physical appearance. Dean is telling Emily that she is of value because her beauty is inspirational. He confines Emily to a passive role. As Emily's story progresses, Dean's need to control and shape Emily to his own needs becomes stronger and more destructive.

Another pivotal experience in *Emily Climbs* occurs when Emily, Teddy, Perry and Ilse have taken refuge in an abandoned house during a snow storm. As in the church scene, a violent storm signals a momentous occasion in Emily's life. Significantly, Emily is trapped when she realizes that she loves Teddy. Her entrapment in the "Old John House" is paralleled by her feelings of imprisonment caused by her realization that she

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[56] Epperly, *Fragrance of Sweet-Grass,* 148.

loves Teddy. Emily's feelings are described in terms of bondage and loss of self.

> Once Emily, glancing up suddenly, found Teddy looking at her strangely. For just a moment their eyes met and locked - only a moment - yet Emily was never really to belong to herself again." (*EC* 259)

As Emily looks out the window she realizes that by loving Teddy, she has lost her freedom.

> Through the woods were unfathomable spaces of white storm. For a moment Emily wished she were out in them - there would be freedom there from this fetter of terrible delight that had so suddenly and inexplicably made her a prisoner - her who hated bonds. (*EC* 260)

This language of bondage is similar to the language Montgomery used to describe her own emotions on her wedding day.

> 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. (*SJ* II 68; Jan. 28, 1912)

Similarly, when she wrote of her love for Herman Leard, the repeated use of the word "possessed" implies a loss of self, a relinquishment of self-control. In Montgomery's life, love and marriage signified a loss of autonomy. Indeed, in her time, marriage would have certainly meant the forfeiture of independence and freedom for a woman. In marriage, a woman would be expected to sublimate her own needs and desires to those of her husband.

Emily, sensing the negative and disempowering consequences of her love for Teddy, immediately frees herself through her writing. A chance remark by Teddy causes her imagination to reel. She suddenly imagines the plot for a book, chapter by chapter,

down to its title: *A Seller of Dreams*. The title of the book is significant, as it foreshadows Emily's own surrender to romance and convention at the expense of her ambitions. Montgomery shows here the potential incompatibility of love and art for women. Love and art cannot easily exist simultaneously in a woman's life. Emily's love for Teddy wipes out all thoughts of literary success. Conversely, her ambition leaves no room for romance.

> She had forgotten that she had been falling in love with Teddy - she had forgotten everything but her wonderful idea: chapter by chapter, page by page, it unrolled itself before her in the darkness. (*EC* 261)

Romance and ambition continue to compete throughout the novel. It is clear, that in the eyes of society, Emily's passage from childhood to womanhood is dependent upon her being desired by men. Emily's family only realizes that she has become a woman once they discover that Emily has had two proposals of marriage.

> Could *this* be Emily - this tall young woman cooly giving her reasons for refusing an offer of marriage - and talking about the 'types' she fancied? Elizabeth - Laura - even Ruth looked at her as if they had never seen her before. And there was a new respect in their eyes...At that moment, although they were quite unconscious of it, they ceased to regard her as a child. At a bound she entered their world and must henceforth be met on equal terms. (*EC* 232)

The respect that Emily has gained as a result of her entry into the world of womanhood will be increased when she marries. An unmarried woman, in Emily's world, could never gain the respect and social standing that a married woman would enjoy. Montgomery knew this to be true in her own life as well. Towards the end of *Emily Climbs*, Montgomery introduces an example of female success. Janet Royal, born and bred in Prince Edward Island, has made a name for herself in the magazine business

in New York. She is successful, unmarried and independent. Yet she is viewed with suspicion in Shrewsbury and Blair Water, and her success is meaningless next to the fact that she has never succeeded in finding a husband. Janet Royal's mother voices the majority opinion when she comments, "'She gets a big salary. But she's an old maid for all that.'" (*EC* 277)

At her first introduction, Janet Royal is a role model for Emily. Her arrival in Shrewsbury is a cause of great excitement. "Was it possible that some day [Emily] would be a brilliant, successful woman like Miss Royal?" (*EC* 275) Emily is given the chance to go to New York with Janet Royal to work on the staff of the magazine. She is thrilled by the possibility but certain that her Aunt Elizabeth will never consent to let her go. Janet Royal goes to see Elizabeth herself to convince her that New York would be a great opportunity for Emily. In her conversation with Elizabeth, it becomes clear that the real issue involved is Emily's chance for matrimony. Janet Royal tells Elizabeth that it is becoming more common for women to have careers, to which Elizabeth responds, "'I suppose it's all right for them if they don't get married.'" (*EC* 291) If Emily goes to New York to pursue a career she might ruin her chances at marriage. Janet Royal recognizes this prejudice for she experiences it everywhere in her own life. "She knew that in Blair Water and in Shrewsbury she was regarded as an old maid, and therefore a failure, no matter what her income and her standing might be in New York." (*EC* 291) Interestingly, Elizabeth and Laura are not considered failures, though both are unmarried. However, neither has ever strayed from the domestic sphere and thus abandoned their proper roles as women. It is Janet Royal who has flouted female convention and tradition who is

viewed as an aberration.

It is finally decided that Emily must choose for herself whether to go to New York. Emily had been secure in her knowledge that her Aunt Elizabeth would never allow her to go. "The Murray pride - and prejudice - would be an impassable barrier." (*EC* 291) When faced with the decision herself, it becomes clear that it is Emily's own pride and prejudice (and, by extension, Montgomery's) that will not allow her to go. Racked with indecision, Emily seeks the counsel of her friends. Mr. Carpenter, her old teacher and mentor, discourages her from going, warning her that she will become "Yankeefied" if she leaves Prince Edward Island. Dean Priest is away when Emily is faced with her decision, yet, significantly, Emily feels certain that he would tell her not to go. She is afraid to ask Teddy, for fear that he would tell her to go, which "would hurt unbearably - because it would show that he didn't care whether she went or stayed." (*EC* 295)

Why did Montgomery keep Emily back? Certainly part of the reason was that voiced by Mr. Carpenter. Montgomery wanted Emily to be "pure Canadian through and through." (*EC* 294) But the main reason that Montgomery prevented Emily from leaving was so that she could play out the romantic script that Emily is destined to follow. Considering Montgomery's own feelings about love and marriage, however, the script is bound to be fraught with complications. Emily will not follow a straightforward path to romantic fulfilment. Montgomery's own experiences with love and marriage will be exposed both in her difficulty in documenting Emily's story, and in the unhappiness that Emily experiences along the way to her destiny. *Emily's Quest*, the shortest novel of the

trilogy, was, for Montgomery, a most laborious task. Montgomery allowed the bleakness of her own life to seep into this last novel of the trilogy. Unable to retreat into a past free of the complications involved in womanhood, Montgomery had to confront her own feelings and experiences involved in living up to society's expectations of women. Emily's conflicting identities, the detached, solitary artist and the traditional clan member, will begin to compete more fiercely in the next novel. As she grows older, Emily, like Montgomery, will be compelled to wear a mask of conformity.

Chapter 4

Fantasy and Reality: *The Blue Castle* and *Emily's Quest*

After the completion of *Emily Climbs*, Montgomery faced the unhappy prospect of her third and final book in the Emily series. Her first mention of the third Emily book is recorded on May 26, 1924. She finished it over two years later. In her journal she expressed the difficulty and frustration she had in writing it. On April 2, 1926, she recorded in her journal

> Got out my MS of *Emily 3* and read it to get into the spirit of it again. I *must* get down to work. Haven't done a thing since November. The book will be poor stuff I fear. My heart is not in it. (*SJ* III 292)

In an entry for June 30, 1926, Montgomery again mentions *Emily's Quest*. "I began work - again - on *Emily III*. I wonder if I shall *ever* get that book done." (*SJ* III 298) On October 13, 1926, she reports that she has finished her third Emily book.

> Yesterday morning I actually finished writing *Emily's Quest*. Of course I have to revise it 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 heaven it is the last of the Emily series. (*SJ* III 310)

When Montgomery finished her revisions on the novel and sent it off to her publisher, she despaired,

> It is no good. How could it be? It seems to me I'll never be able to write anything worthwhile again. But perhaps if I could get rested - and had a few unbroken moments. (*SJ* III 313; Nov. 20, 1926)

Emily's Quest was far from the inspired and joyful experience of *Emily of New Moon*. Whereas *Emily of New Moon* took only six months to write, Montgomery laboured over *Emily's Quest* for almost two years. The result of this extended labour is,

surprisingly, a very short book. Montgomery seemed to blame external circumstances for her difficulty in writing *Emily's Quest*. If she had rest and spare time she might be able to write something "worthwhile." Indeed, Montgomery's life was not conducive to the leisure that is essential to writing. Her husband's illness made it necessary for Montgomery to take on even more of the parish work than before. Her ongoing legal battles with L.C. Page occupied much of her time. A move from Leaskdale to a new congregation in Norval interrupted and postponed her work. Finally, a lawsuit with a family from her community over an automobile accident consumed her with worry. It might not be wondered that she had difficulty writing under such circumstances.

However, external circumstances alone cannot account for Montgomery's difficulty and reluctance in writing *Emily's Quest*. She proved that she *was* able to write under such circumstances, and indeed derive enjoyment from her work, by writing another novel, *The Blue Castle*, at the same time that she was writing *Emily's Quest*. The difference in her attitude to *The Blue Castle* is apparent. On November 27, 1924, Montgomery recorded in her journal, "I am finding much pleasure writing my new book *The Blue Castle*." (*SJ* III 209) On February 8, 1925, she wrote,

> On Wednesday I finished a novel, *The Blue Castle* - a little comedy for adults. I have enjoyed writing it very much. It seemed a refuge from the cares and worries of my real world. (*SJ* III 218)

And on March 10, 1925,

> I have finished revising *The Blue Castle* and have it ready to be typed. I am sorry it is done. It has been for several months a daily escape from a world of intolerable realities. (*SJ* III 222)

It is clear, then, that Montgomery's difficulty with *Emily's Quest* was due to more

than her extenuating circumstances. Typically, Montgomery used her writing to escape from the worry and unhappiness of her life. *Emily's Quest,* however, did not serve this purpose. As Mary Rubio observes, "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." [57] Rubio attributes Montgomery's difficulty with *Emily's Quest* to "the unhappy prospect of marrying off Emily."[58]Although marriage is the theme of many of Montgomery's stories, particularly her short stories, she seemed reluctant to lead her two favourite characters, Anne and Emily, to the altar. The closure of marriage is delayed for both Anne and Emily until the end of the third book of each series. Marriage seemed to signify the end of the story for Montgomery's characters. Although Anne's story is continued after her marriage, her character fades into the background. Anne's personality, once so vibrant and unique, is eclipsed by other characters in the novels that follow. Emily's story, on the other hand, simply stops with her engagement. In Montgomery's time, it was expected that a woman's interests and ambitions would be subordinated to those of her husband and family. Montgomery's own marriage provides ample evidence of this. Her duties to her husband, his work and their family, always took priority over her writing. For Anne and Emily, then, marriage would mean the suppression of their individual and iconoclastic personalities.

Of *Anne of the Island*, the third in the series of *Anne* books, Montgomery

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[57] Rubio, "Subverting the Trite," 32.

[58] Rubio, "Subverting the Trite," 30.

complained,

> I don't see how I can possibly do anything worth while with it. *Anne* is grown-up and can't be made as interesting as when a child...I must at least engage Anne for I'll never be given any rest until I do. (*SJ* II 133; Sept. 27, 1913)

Marriage is treated negatively throughout the Emily trilogy. There is not one portrait of a happy marriage in the novels. Most of the characters are widowed or unmarried. As Marie Campbell points out,

> From its first introduction in the *Emily of New Moon* series - a trilogy of novels peopled by virgin spinsters, bachelors, and the widowed - the institution of marriage is not exactly bathed in the traditional glow of romance and idealism.[59]

This unfavourable view of marriage is echoed in Montgomery's journals. When recounting the events leading up to her engagement to Ewan MacDonald, she wrote,

> Viewed in the abstract, without reference to any particular man it honestly seemed to me a choice of evils - and which was the least? I balanced them one against the other - but could come to no decision. In some moods - my morning moods - I inclined to think that I would be wiser to keep my freedom and trust life. In other moods -my evening and three-o'clock-at-night moods - I inclined to marriage. In one mood loneliness seemed the greater evil, in another a companionship from which I could never escape... (*SJ* I 322; Oct. 12, 1906)

When Montgomery wrote of her own wedding day, she recorded her feelings of despair and rebellion.

> 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

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[59] Marie Campbell, *Wordbound: Women and Language in L.M. Montgomery's Emily of New Moon Trilogy* (Guelph: University of Guelph, 1993) 94.

ever been in my life. (*SJ* II 68; Jan. 28, 1912)

Since the record of Montgomery's own marriage was far from happy, it is no wonder that she might have been reluctant to record the marriage of a heroine whose story most closely resembled her own. On the other hand, to leave Emily unmarried was hardly a consideration for Montgomery. Her public and her publishers had been led to expect certain things from her books. Romance and marriage seemed to be a part of the L.M. Montgomery package. Indeed, the inevitability of the marriage of a heroine was hardly confined to the works of Montgomery. Marriage was the fate for most heroines of the Victorian novel. Rachel Blau DuPlessis comments on this common fate of Victorian heroines:

> In nineteenth-century narrative, where women heroes were concerned, quest and love plots were intertwined, simultaneous discourses, but at the resolution of the work, the energies of the *Bildung* were incompatible with the closure in successful courtship or marriage. Quest for women was thus finite; we learn that any plot of self-realization was at the service of the marriage plot and was subordinate to, or covered within, the magnetic power of that ending.[60]

Although Montgomery's Emily series shows many signs of subverting traditional expectations for women, Emily becomes less radical and independent as the series progresses. Emily's spirit and fire of the previous two novels are almost extinguished in *Emily's Quest.* She is not the rebellious, self-assertive character of *Emily of New Moon.* Emily has lost, to a great degree, the self-confidence and independence of belief and outlook that defined her character in the first two novels. Faith in herself and her talent

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[60] Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth-Century Women Writers* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985) 6.

are diminished despite her continued success in writing. Her work fades in importance when set beside her all-consuming love for Teddy Kent. Annis Pratt, in her study entitled *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction*, comments upon this tendency in novels by women. The goal of the female novel of development, she argues, is to groom the heroine for marriage. The process is one of growing down rather than growing up.

> A battle goes on unremittingly within the heads of most women authors between assumptions about male and female behavior norms and dreams of more gender-free possibilities. It is as if the authorial superego or censor, preoccupied with proper conduct for women, were constantly repressing subversive desires for self-expression and development.[61]

Montgomery certainly faced this battle in her own writing. She also faced it in her own life. Marriage seemed an inevitability for both Emily and Montgomery. While Montgomery considered the possibility of remaining unmarried herself, the disadvantages of such a decision seemed to outweigh the advantages. Loneliness and childlessness were serious considerations. Moreover, "spinsters" were viewed with pity and disdain in Montgomery's society. No matter what a woman's accomplishments might be, the failure to secure a husband would always outweigh any success she might achieve.

> Certainly no one knew better than Montgomery herself how the unmarried woman is regarded by neighbours and family - even the woman who writes a best-seller or is invited to meet the governor general of Canada because her writing has touched him.[62]

Although, as Mary Rubio argues, the prospect of Emily's inevitable marriage made Montgomery reluctant to continue the series, I believe that Montgomery had other,

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[61] Annis Pratt, *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985) 11.

[62] Epperly, *Fragrance of Sweet-Grass*, 173.

equally important reasons, for delaying the third novel. *Emily's Quest* takes the reader to the period in Emily's life just before her marriage. I would argue that it also takes Montgomery to a similar time in her own life. Both Montgomery and Emily shared the experience of remaining in the home of their childhood with elderly relations, cut off from the society and friendship of their youth. For Montgomery, the years leading up to her marriage to Ewan MacDonald, the years in which she was obliged to take care of her aging and increasingly difficult grandmother, were some of the most unhappy years of her life. Many of her friends had married or left Cavendish. During the worst winter months she was completely cut off from society. Her journal entries, during these years, record her dissatisfaction with life and her fear of the future. On March 3, 1905, Montgomery wrote,

> I fear that this life I am living is unfitting me for any other life. I am being compelled to shape myself into habits that will - or may - hold me prisoner when the necessity for them is removed. I shall, I fear, be unable to adapt myself then to any other existence. I know, too, that although my present life is anything but a happy or satisfactory one, it is likely to be still less so when changes come...I could bear all the hard things in my life now if I could look for something better beyond. But it is all dark and uncertain. (*SJ* I 305)

As Montgomery was writing *Emily's Quest*, she must have been reliving those long, lonely years in Cavendish after she had given up teaching to take care of her grandmother. She had not yet written *Anne of Green Gables*. She anticipated a future in which she would be cast out of her home after her grandmother's death and forced to make a living writing "pot-boilers" for small magazines. The only alternative to such a future was marriage.

Perhaps because she was unable to face these memories, Montgomery postponed

her work on *Emily's Quest* to write a completely different book, *The Blue Castle*. Mary Rubio speculates that *The Blue Castle* was written in reaction to *Emily's Quest*.

> Tucking *The Blue Castle* in before the third Emily book, Montgomery blows off 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.[63]

In addition to the distasteful prospect of Emily's inevitable marriage, I believe that Montgomery postponed *Emily's Quest* because its associations to her own life were too painful. Montgomery was able to find escape and pleasure in most of her writing because she was able to retreat into a world of childhood, a world free of the complications involved in being an ambitious and creative woman in a patriarchal society. By continuing Emily's story, Montgomery had to face those complications. She had to relive her own struggles to survive as a writing woman in turn-of-the-century Canada. She had to examine her own choice of marriage over an independent life devoted to her ambition. Moreover, considering her own marriage, and considering the autobiographical nature of the novel, Montgomery must have had difficulty imagining a happy marriage for Emily.

> 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.[64]

Instead of continuing Emily's story, Montgomery does, indeed, "blow off steam" in *The Blue Castle.* In this novel, Montgomery pokes fun at society and community and

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[63] Rubio, "Subverting the Trite," 31-2.

[64] Rubio, "Subverting the Trite," 28.

gender expectations. Mary Rubio describes *The Blue Castle* as

> 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.[65]

If the prospect of *Emily's Quest* was forcing Montgomery to relive unhappy memories of her adult life in Cavendish, *The Blue Castle* allowed her to vent some of her frustrations and anger invoked by those memories. In many of Montgomery's novels, family and community are conversely stifling and empowering. In the Emily series we see how Emily draws her strength and pride from the traditions of the Murrays, even while these same traditions serve to imprison Emily in rigid definitions of proper female behaviour. Community and family are both criticized and praised. In *The Blue Castle*, however, community and family are portrayed only negatively. The heroine, Valancy Stirling, is oppressed, not empowered, by her clan. At the age of twenty-nine, Valancy has come to believe that she is worthless because she is both unmarried and unsought by any man. On the first page of *The Blue Castle*, the reader is made aware of the one great failing of Valancy's life.

> Valancy wakened early, in the lifeless, hopeless hour just preceding dawn. She had not slept very well. One does not sleep well, sometimes, when one is twenty-nine on the morrow, and unmarried, in a community and connection where the unmarried are simply those who have failed to get a man.[66]

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[65] Rubio, "Subverting the Trite," 32.

[66] L.M. Montgomery, *The Blue Castle* (Toronto: Seal Books, 1988) 1. Hereafter, all references to *The Blue Castle* will be referred to, parenthetically, within the text, as *TBC*.

Even though she is twenty-nine years old, because Valancy is unmarried she is treated like a child. She is not allowed to read novels. She is not allowed to go anywhere without consulting her mother. She is not allowed any form or pretence of privacy. She is allowed to be alone in her room only to sleep. She is continually insulted and abused by her relatives. She is subjected to relentless teasing by an uncle about men and marriage. As a result of this oppression by her clan members, Valancy is submissive and insecure.

Valancy is freed from her oppression when she is made to believe that she is the victim of heart disease and has only a year to live. With the release of death before her, Valancy disposes of her shackles and defies her clan in every way possible. Ultimately, Valancy leaves home to take care of a dying woman who has been outcast from her community for bearing a child out of wedlock. She then asks Barney Snaith, a recluse living a solitary life on an island, to marry her so that she might have one last chance at happiness before her inevitable death. Much of the remainder of the novel succumbs to formula romance, but at least half of the novel is a biting attack on the hypocrisy and narrow-mindedness of clan and community.

In an analysis of Montgomery's fiction, T.D. MacLulich offers the following criticism:

> Montgomery's fiction was...strongly influenced by her acceptance of restrictive standards that were prevalent in her society...These self-chosen limitations...reveal Montgomery's acquiescence to the secondary and largely domestic role her society traditionally assigned women...Montgomery's life and art were both shaped by an outlook that exalted the household and the local community as the embodiment of the highest good to which women could aspire. From her family and from her childhood community, Montgomery acquired what can only be called a

> thoroughly domestic imagination. In her own life she repeatedly adopted traditional women's roles, ministering to others rather than striving after her own personal fulfilment.[67]

This is a huge simplification of a complex woman and her work. One cannot deny that Montgomery was socialized to a great degree. However, she repeatedly rebelled against her own socialization, both in her journal and her fiction. It is highly unlikely that she felt that the household and community were the highest good to which a woman could attain. Community often comes under attack in both her fiction and her journals. Particularly during the years in which she was writing the Emily series and *The Blue Castle,* she often complained about the small-minded pettiness of her neighbours. In an entry for October 1, 1921, Montgomery wrote in her journal,

> There isn't a single interesting person in this village -not one who makes you feel better just because of a chat. I really never saw such a collection of stupid, uninteresting people. They know nothing but gossip and malicious gossip at that. They are all old or elderly, not only in body but in mind. (*SJ* III 18)

And on October 18, 1921 she wrote, "A small village like this, is, I think, the pettiest place in the world. The 'retired' folk have little to do except 'keep tabs' on their neighbours." (*SJ* III 20) These are not the words of a woman who exalts community and household as the highest good. They are the words of a woman who is fed up with social convention and narrow-mindedness. Montgomery's mounting frustration with her community provides inspiration for *The Blue Castle.*

It is interesting to speculate whether Valancy might be a projection of

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[67] T.D. MacLulich, "L.M. Montgomery's Portraits of the Artist: Realism, Idealism, and the Domestic Imagination," *English Studies in Canada* 11 (1985): 464.

Montgomery herself. Montgomery was certainly never as submissive and insecure as Valancy. However, her adult years in Cavendish do bear some similarity to Valancy's situation. Her grandmother was exceedingly strict and persisted in treating Montgomery as a child. She was never allowed company and was forced to live by her grandmother's rules. The winter months were particularly hard for her as she was forced to sleep downstairs because her own room was too cold. On April 30, 1904, Montgomery recorded her joy at being able to sleep in her own room once again. "Up here everything is different. Here I am a woman, not a child, and order my ways as suits me."[68] If the idea of *Emily's Quest* was bringing back memories of this time in Montgomery's life, Valancy's emancipation in *The Blue Castle* must have given Montgomery great satisfaction. Through Valancy she was able to say the things that she was always afraid to say. Through Valancy she was able to tell the truth as she saw it. Montgomery often despaired at her inability to say what she really felt. She felt it necessary to wear a mask of conformity to conceal her true feelings. "I am a coward and dare not tell the truth as I see it and consequently I am not free." (*SJ* II, 121; June 29, 1913) On one occasion, Montgomery wondered, "What would happen to 'Society as she is' if the truth were told always? It is an amusing speculation."[69]

Writing *The Blue Castle*, then, must have been a liberating experience for Montgomery. The main theme is that of freedom: freedom from society, freedom from family and tradition, freedom from convention and propriety. It is no wonder that

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[68] Montgomery, *Journals of L.M. Montgomery* (Apr.30, 1904).

[69] Montgomery, *Journals of L.M. Montgomery* (June 10, 1913).

Montgomery derived such pleasure from it.

Certainly, *The Blue Castle* is a direct attack on the hypocrisy of the local community. Moreover, it is an attack on a patriarchal society in which a woman's value was based on her marital status. Because of its powerful social satire, *The Blue Castle* became a successful musical in Poland[70]. Its attack on authoritarian social structures was very appealing to a nation once oppressed by Russian communism.

> 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 long been 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![71]

Apart from being an "unadulterated and bitter assault on the patriarchal system of Montgomery's era,"[72] *The Blue Castle* provided Montgomery with the much-needed escape from reality that *Emily's Quest* did not offer. Satire aside, *The Blue Castle* is also an exercise of Montgomery's own fantasies. Inspiration for the novel came from Montgomery's trip to Bala, in the Muskoka region of Ontario. Montgomery fell in love with Bala. She felt that it had "the flavor of home." (*SJ* III 62; July 30, 1922) During

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[70] *The Blue Castle* premiered in Cracow in 1982 "and has continued playing continuously as one of Poland's most successful stage plays since then." (Rubio, "Subverting the Trite," 33)

[71] Rubio, "Subverting the Trite," 34. Rubio goes on to point out that Montgomery has become something of a cult figure in Poland: "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."

[72] Rubio, "Subverting the Trite," 32.

her time in Bala, Montgomery recorded a fantasy inspired by her surroundings.

> I picked out an island that just suited me. I built thereon a summer cottage and furnished it *de luxe*. I set up a boat-house and a motor launch. I peopled it with summer guests...We spent a whole idyllic summer there together. Youth - mystery - delight, were all ours once more. I lived it all out in every detail; we swam and sailed and fished and read and built camp fires under the pines..and dined gloriously at sunset *al fresco*, and then sat out on moonlit porches...and always we talked - the soul-satisfying talk of kindred spirits. (*SJ* III 63; July 31, 1922)

True to her fantasy, *The Blue Castle* is set on an island in Muskoka. Valancy and her husband Barney live there, away from the prying eyes of neighbours, remote from the conventions of society. The relationship of Valancy and Barney represents Montgomery's own dream of a happy marriage. Unlike Anne, Valancy blossoms after her marriage to Barney. She becomes more vibrant, daring and iconoclastic. Theirs is a marriage founded on friendship and equality. It is significant, however, that in order to realize such a marriage, Valancy and Barney must shun society and its rules. Valancy's marriage symbolizes a freedom that she never experienced as an unmarried woman.

> Valancy thought they were splendidly free. It was amazing to be able to sit up half the night and look at the moon if you wanted to. To be late for meals if you wanted to - she who had always been rebuked so sharply by her mother and so reproachfully by Cousin Stickles if she were one minute late. Dawdle over meals as long as you wanted to. Leave your crusts if you wanted to. Sit on a sun-warm rock and paddle your bare feet in the hot sand if you wanted to. Just sit and do nothing in the beautiful silence if you wanted to. In short, do any fool thing you wanted to whenever the notion took you. If *that* wasn't freedom, what was? (*TBC* 154)

The successful nature writer, John Foster, who turns out to be Valancy's husband Barney, may also be an extension of Montgomery's fantasy. Writing under a pseudonym, Barney is spared the intrusive attentions of critics and fans. Spending his life on a secluded island, surrounded by the beauty of nature, "John Foster" can pursue his writing

uninterrupted. Duties of family and household do not interfere with his art. The freedom offered by the island, and undoubtedly by his gender, contributes to the pursuit of his ambition.

It is significant that the writer in this story is male. As a man, "John Foster" enjoys a freedom from societal conventions and expectations that Emily and, by extension, Montgomery can only dream of. While Valancy has access to this freedom, it is only through her marriage that she is able to enjoy the same freedom as her husband. Both Montgomery and Emily must subordinate their writing to the other duties inherent in a woman's life. They are not free, as Barney is, to live their lives according to their own will and standards.

Having vented some of her frustration with society and community in *The Blue Castle*, Montgomery finally turned her attention to *Emily's Quest*. But her heart was not in it. The writing in this novel seems uninspired, bored and lifeless. As some critics have pointed out[73], the chapter titles of the *Emily of New Moon* and *Emily Climbs* have been replaced by numbered chapters in *Emily's Quest*, as if Montgomery couldn't be bothered to summon enough energy to invent chapter titles. In *Emily's Quest*, the enthusiastic narrator of the first two novels is replaced by "a rather weary, sometimes peevish,

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[73] Gwendolyn Anne Guth notes the absence of chapter titles in her thesis *Interplay in the Emily Trilogy of L.M. Montgomery*. Marie Campbell has also made this observation: "*Emily's Quest*, unlike the first two novels in the trilogy, contain[s] [no] chapter headings, suggesting that both the narrator's and Emily's voices have been somehow silenced and narrative control lost." (Campbell, "Wedding bells," 142)

omniscient narrator."[74] The melancholy of Montgomery's own life is echoed by Emily. Emily's loneliness and isolation reflect Montgomery's own state of mind. *Emily's Quest* is depressing. It deals with dark issues of thwarted love and poisonous jealousy. In this final book of the trilogy, Montgomery was unable to prevent the misery of her own life from seeping into Emily's narrative. The story of Emily's literary success is overshadowed by the death of her creativity and the suffocation of her spirit.

Emily's Quest is the continuing story of Emily's ascent of the "alpine path." On the surface it might be viewed as the story of Emily's great literary career. As in *Emily Climbs*, she continues to publish stories for magazines and she ultimately realizes her lifelong dream of writing a successful novel. Finally, she wins the heart of the man that she loves and, presumably, lives happily ever after. Below the surface, however, is a much darker story, a story in which a young woman must fight against the forces that attempt to silence her voice.

Emily's voice becomes increasingly silent in this novel. In *Emily of New Moon* and *Emily's Climbs*, Emily's letters to her father and her journal entries shared the narrative. In *Emily's Quest*, the journal entries are much shorter and more infrequent. Although the second Chapter consists entirely of Emily's journal, there are no more journal entries until Chapter 12. After chapter 20 Emily's journal entries disappear completely. If diary writing is an affirmation of autonomy, and if the act of keeping a diary is an assertion of identity and an indication of self-worth, then the disappearance

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[74] Gwendolyn Ann Guth, *Interplay in the Emily Trilogy of L.M. Montgomery: a Canadian Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa, 1991) 77.

of Emily's diary for much of the novel has serious implications for Emily's identity and sense of self.

Dean Priest is the main factor in the silencing of Emily's voice. Emily's friends all leave Blair Water to pursue their various careers. Mr. Carpenter, Emily's former teacher and mentor, dies in the third chapter. Dean Priest's presence, however, is more pronounced in this novel. Because Emily is so isolated from friends and peers, she now relies entirely on Dean's judgement of her work. Emily forfeits her autonomy and her independence of opinion to Dean. Dean, however, belittles Emily's work. When Emily, speaking to Dean of how lonely the forthcoming winter will be, comforts herself with the knowledge that she will have her work, Dean responds,

> 'Oh yes, your work,' agreed Dean with the little, tolerant half-amused inflection in his voice that always came now when he spoke of her 'work,' as it if tickled him hugely that she should call her pretty scribbling 'work.' Well, one must humour the charming child. He could not have said so more plainly in words. His implication cut across Emily's sensitive soul like a whiplash. And all at once her work and her ambitions became - momentarily at least - as childish and unimportant as he considered them. She could not hold her own conviction against him. He must know. He was so clever - so well educated. He *must* know. That was the agony of it. She could not ignore his opinion. Emily knew deep down in her heart that she would never be able wholly to believe in herself until Dean Priest admitted that she could do something honestly worthwhile in its way.[75]

It is interesting to speculate whether Montgomery's husband Ewan was the inspiration for the demonization of Dean. Like Dean, Ewan resented his wife's literary ambitions. During their engagement, Ewan insisted that Montgomery give up her writing

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[75] L.M. Montgomery, *Emily's Quest* (Toronto: McLelland & Stewart, 1989) 36. Hereafter, all references to *Emily's Quest* will be referred to parenthetically, within the text, as *EQ*.

when she was feeling ill. She did so, against her own better judgement, just to please him (*SJ* I, 342; Nov. 10, 1908). During their marriage, Ewan felt threatened by his wife's success. Montgomery felt that Ewan resented any tribute paid to her about her work. The above passage from *Emily's Quest* echoes a passage in Montgomery's journal. On March 25, 1922, as she was preparing to write *Emily Climbs*, Montgomery recorded in her journal

> I have always felt that Ewan never sympathized with or was pleased over any little compliment paid to me or my work in any department. I can't quite account for it but it is there and I have all too often felt the sting of it. 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 - quite good-naturedly -such as a parent might utter when a precocious child is praised. The child mustn't be made conceited - mustn't be allowed to think it is really of any importance...I have always known that 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. (*SJ* III, 48)

In another journal entry, Montgomery wrote, "Ewan secretly hates my work - and openly ignores it. He never refers to it in any way or shows a particle of interest in it." (*SJ* III, 363; Feb. 12, 1928) Ewan's attitude toward Montgomery's writing is reflected in her characterization of Dean. Dean becomes increasingly condescending as Emily grows older and begins to meet with success in her literary endeavours. Montgomery never fully explored the effects of Ewan's denigrating comments about her work in her journal. However, through her characterization of Dean, we are able to witness the devastating effects such cruel criticism might have on a developing writer. Although Ewan's attitude hurt Montgomery, she was able to see it for what it was: resentment and jealousy. Emily, however, does not recognize that Dean's criticism is the result of jealousy and

possessiveness. She takes it at face value and allows Dean to silence her voice and kill her creativity.

When Ilse and Teddy come for a summer visit, Dean is excluded from Emily's world. Dean does not associate with Emily's friends. He keeps to himself, resentful that Emily's friends are diverting her attention from him. At the end of the summer, when Teddy comes to say goodbye to Emily, Dean is with her, eliminating any opportunity for intimate conversation between Emily and Teddy.

> Dean was creeping back into his own, after two weeks' junketings from which he had been barred out. Dean would not go to dances and clam-bakes, but he was always hovering in the background, as everybody concerned felt. He stood with Emily in the garden and there was a certain air of victory and possession about him that did not escape Teddy's eye. (*EQ* 50)

Dean is "barred out" from Emily's world again after Teddy leaves. Frustrated by the lack of progress in her relationship with Teddy, Emily flings herself into her work. She finds the outline of a story that Teddy had inspired when they were trapped in the "Old John House" and decides to write it out. The book consumes her and leaves no time for the attentions of Dean. She finishes her novel, significantly entitled *A Seller of Dreams*, in six weeks. After her manuscript is rejected several times Emily begins to wonder if it is really the wonderful creation she had originally believed it to be. Feeling that she needs an objective opinion, she gives it to Dean Priest. Emily is completely unaware that Dean's opinion will be far from objective.

> Dean looked inscrutably at the little packet she held out to him. So *this* was what had wrapped her away from him all summer - absorbed her - possessed her. The one black drop in his veins - that Priest jealousy of being first -suddenly made its poison felt...He looked into her cold sweet face and starry eyes, grey-purple as a lake at dawn, and hated whatever

was in the packet. (*EQ* 57)

When Dean returns Emily's book to her, he lies and tells her that it is no good. The following passages are filled with death references and imagery. Dean is seen as a murderer. He has killed Emily's creativity and ambition. Emily tells Dean that she hates him for his criticism, even if her hatred is unjustified.

> 'Can you expect me to be just when you've just killed me? Oh, I know I asked for it - I know it's good for me. Horrible things always are good for you, I suppose. After you've been killed a few times you don't mind it. But the first time one does - squirm. Go away, Dean. Don't come back for a week at least. The funeral will be over then...I don't want sympathy. I only want time to bury myself decently. (*EQ* 58)

In a fit of passion, Emily throws her book into the fire and then, seized with regret and repentance, watches it burn. She kills her book, and thus her own spirit and creativity, for Dean. She sells her dream of glory for the opinion of one man. In her despair she runs blindly down the stairs and trips on Aunt Laura's sewing basket, causing the scissors to pierce her foot. Blood poisoning sets in, and Emily comes close to death. Both literally and metaphorically, Dean has almost killed Emily. Although she recovers, Emily ceases to write. She abandons her ambition, and her creativity deserts her. During her convalescence Dean is constantly at her side. In her weakened state of selfhood, Emily agrees to marry him.

In the following chapters Emily is transformed from an ambitious and creative young woman to a docile, domestic and boring mate for Dean. All her energy is consumed in furnishing the house that Dean has bought for them to live in. The house, named "the Disappointed House" by Emily in her childhood, symbolizes the thwarted course that Emily's life has eventually followed. Perhaps it signifies Montgomery's own

disappointment in being unable to imagine a brighter future for her most independent and creative heroine. Death references continue, particularly in relation to Dean. Mr. Kelly tells Emily that her marriage to Dean will be "'the death av you.'" (*EQ* 72) Emily suddenly remembers with horror a rumour that Dean had seen the Black Mass celebrated. (*EQ* 74) A picture of Dean's mother causes Emily to wonder why she looks so sad. Dean's response, "'Because she was married to a Priest,'" (*EQ* 85) foreshadows what Emily's own marriage will be. "Dean Priest's sad lovely mother. Yes, she had known fear; it looked out of her pictured eyes now in that dim furtive light." (*EQ* 93) The change in Emily herself is evident.

> [Emily] was changed. Cousin Jimmy and Aunt Laura knew that, though no one else seemed to notice it. Often there was an odd restlessness in her eyes. And something was missing from her laughter. It was not so quick - so spontaneous of old. She was a woman before her time. (*EQ* 90)

Some of the language and imagery of bondage and captivity used to describe Emily's feelings is similar to that used by Montgomery in her account of her wedding day. Emily feels imprisoned by her engagement to Dean.

> She was very happy two-thirds of that summer - which she told herself was a high average. But in the other third were hours of which she never spoke to anyone - hours in which her soul felt caught in a trap - hours when the great, green emerald winking on her finger seemed like a fetter. And once she even took it off for a little while. (*EQ* 85)

Emily finally breaks her engagement to Dean when she realizes that she still loves Teddy. Dean admits that he had lied about her book. He says, upon parting with her, "'Emily, I give your life back to you. It has been mine, remember, since I saved you that day on Malvern rocks. It's your own again.'" (*EQ* 102) Emily leaves Dean with her regained freedom and with the satisfaction that Dean has finally admitted that she can

write.

After this important turning point, we are still only half-way through the novel. In the second half of *Emily's Quest*, Emily writes and has published a successful novel. With this dream accomplished there remains only the dream of romance. However, a series of misunderstandings conspire to keep Emily and Teddy apart until the end of the novel. What little energy and optimism the novel possessed before this point seems to sputter and die in the last half of *Emily's Quest*. At the outset of the novel, Emily is described as being "filled with youth's joy in mere existence." (*EQ* 2) Both youth and joy seem to desert Emily halfway through the novel. After Emily breaks her engagement with Dean, she begins to write in her journal again. Her journal entries are brief and uneventful. Some of the passages are transcribed from Montgomery's own journal, but Emily's entries do not possess the narrative flow and continuity of Montgomery's. Melancholy, hopelessness and resignation are the dominant tone of Emily's diary. Much of her writing is concerned with nature, but the imagery is often associated with death. In one entry, the dreary November weather echoes Emily's state of mind. "'And the damp and gloom have crept into my soul and spirit and sapped out all life and energy...I feel lustreless, dowdy and uninviting - I even bore myself.'" (*EQ* 159) Emily's description of autumn leaves is used as a metaphor for her feelings about herself and her life.

> 'The poor dead leaves - yet not quite dead, it seemed. There was still enough unquiet life left in them to make them restless and forlorn. They harkened yet to every call of the wind, which cared for them no longer but only played freakishly with them and broke their rest. I felt sorry for the leaves as I watched them in the dull, weird twilight, and angry - in a petulant fashion that almost made me laugh -with the wind that would not

> leave them in peace. Why should they - and I - be vexed with these transient, passionate breaths of desire for a life which has passed us by?' (*EQ* 160)

As Gwendolyn Guth points out, "The diary transforms from the fertile, artistic training ground it had been in *Emily Climbs* to a rather desperate outlet for frustration."[76]

Emily does have a great moment when she finally sees her novel published. But this achievement does not sustain her for long. She falls into the old pattern of melancholy and hopelessness again. It is as if Montgomery does not have the creative energy to keep Emily interesting or interested in her own life. Emily has a series of suitors, all of whom are disposed of unceremoniously in turn. She and Teddy continue to misunderstand one another, and a deceitful trick by Teddy's mother forces them even further apart. The climax of the novel occurs when Emily's best friend Ilse announces her engagement to Teddy. Emily knows by this time that Teddy really loves her and is only marrying Ilse out of loneliness, but her pride keeps her from going to him.

By this point Emily's journal has ceased to be a part of the novel. Emily's work and ambition are rarely discussed. Teddy has become the central focus of Emily's consciousness. Emily, the headstrong and independent character that Montgomery loved so much, is reduced to a passive heroine of formula romance. The climactic scene in which Ilse jilts Teddy at the altar - because she suddenly realizes that she really loves Perry Miller - changes the tone of the novel to comic farce.[77] After this comic

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[76] Guth, 79.

[77] Mary Rubio believes that the "shift into farce...make[s] the wedding ceremony in *Emily's Quest* so ridiculous that all semblance of the earlier seriousness in the novel is lost." (Rubio, "Subverting the Trite, 29)

development, the novel is wrapped up with surprising speed. In just a few pages, an indeterminate number of years pass in which Emily is lonely but feeds her soul on her ambition and her love of nature. Finally Teddy comes back to Emily, years of misunderstanding are cleared up in a few words and their reunion and engagement is swift.

A happy but unsatisfactory ending: the last few pages of the book are so rushed and vague that one is left with the impression that Montgomery could hardly wait to be done with it. Her relief upon completion of the novel supports this point. The joy that Montgomery derived from writing *Emily of New Moon* and even *Emily Climbs* was completely absent in *Emily's Quest*. For Montgomery, childhood symbolized the only time of freedom and creativity in a woman's life. The only other portrait of freedom found in Montgomery's work is that depicted in *The Blue Castle*, a freedom born of Montgomery's fantasy of living beyond the boundaries of society. T.D. MacLulich criticizes Montgomery's "belief in a vulgarized Romantic view of the artist as someone who lives in a sort of perpetual childhood."[78] Perhaps Montgomery viewed her own childhood as the period of her greatest creativity and freedom. As a woman she would have to forfeit that freedom in favour of convention and propriety. It is clear from her journal that Montgomery certainly considered childhood as the happiest time of her life, while if we are to believe the portrait created in her journal, most of Montgomery's adult life was extremely unhappy. Because she identified so strongly with Emily, Montgomery was unable to imagine a future much different for Emily than her own present. Being an

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[78] MacLulich, "L.M. Montgomery's Portraits of the Artist," 463.

unmarried woman meant severe loneliness. But when Montgomery considered her own marriage in relation to Emily, marriage was not a happy alternative.

Montgomery's fiction can be read as a commentary on her own life. Both Emily and Valancy represent aspects of Montgomery's own character. Both lived beyond the cultural boundaries of their society to some extent. But both end up conforming to cultural expectations in the end, just as Montgomery did. Although Montgomery's conventional endings may be disappointing to some modern readers, it is important to note that Montgomery chose to write stories that explore the lives of girls and women, stories that examine and criticize the cultural expectations of her time.

> Montgomery both works within the traditional literary genre of domestic romance and yet circumvents its restrictive conventions when she critiques her society;...she decides to incorporate elements of women's experience that were not usually dealt with in fiction for women and children in her era;...she makes it safe for herself to tell tales and say things which are outside the pale of acceptable female discourse.[79]

Although *Emily's Quest* may be disappointing for some readers because of its darkness and the speed with which it wraps up Emily's life, it is nonetheless an interesting study of the female psyche. Its examination of the impediments to women's writing (symbolized by Dean Priest) and its relation to Montgomery's own life make it worthwhile.

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[79] Rubio, "Subverting the Trite," 8.

Conclusion

Throughout her career, L.M. Montgomery wrote novels "of and for girls," (Montgomery, *My Dear Mr. M*, 35) that did not explicitly challenge cultural expectations for girls and women. Her books are safe, comfortable stories featuring independent heroines who gradually conform to the expectations of their society. Yet Montgomery was dissatisfied with her fiction. She often complained about the expectations of her public. She felt trapped in a stylistic rut from which, she felt, her readers and her publisher would not let her stray. She wanted to write something completely different. The *Emily* series is her public attempt at something different. Emily is distinct from any of Montgomery's other characters. Her fierce independence, her strong sense of self, her single-minded ambition make Emily a unique and engaging character. But even in the *Emily* series Montgomery eventually caved into conventionality. The character traits that made Emily so appealing in *Emily of New Moon* begin to fade as the series progresses, until Emily is merely another romantic heroine destined for marriage and childbearing.

It is, in fact, Montgomery's journal, the effort of a lifetime, that fulfils Montgomery's desire to write something different. Montgomery's journal is the most ambitious and important work of her literary career.

It is clear that Montgomery herself considered her journal a serious literary endeavour. The effort expended in writing each entry, her determination to maintain a sense of continuity between entries, and the labour involved in recopying and editing the journals, all point to Montgomery's consciousness of the importance of her journal. It is

significant that in 1930 Montgomery began a type-written and edited version of her already edited journal. She then revised that typewritten copy in 1932, and in 1942 she was rereading her typewritten copy and adding parenthetical comments.[80] Montgomery was constantly in the process of rewriting her life. Her work on her journal was ongoing.

While Montgomery's journal cannot be classified as fiction, it is significant that the journal shares many of the qualities of fiction. Valerie Raoul distinguishes diaries from fiction because

> their apparent lack of selectivity and the absence of conscious artistic effect in the combination of entries are radically opposed to a traditional view of the literary work of art. Coherence and global unity are not to be found in a diary in the same way that they are in a 'classical' novel. The cast of characters may shift constantly, the intrigue is genuinely unpredictable...The occasional diaries which read like novels...owe this effect to fortuitous external circumstances rather than to conscious design.[81]

Contrary to Raoul's distinctions, Montgomery's journal does tend to read like a novel. This is not, however, due to "fortuitous external circumstances." There is definitely a "conscious artistic effect in the combination of entries." There is also "selectivity." And, although the intrigue is "genuinely unpredictable," that is undermined by the fact that Montgomery edited and perhaps even made additions to her original journal.

What emerges from this incredible effort is not necessarily a true and balanced portrait of Montgomery. It is a portrait of the female artist, a representation of a tortured writer. The characterization of Montgomery found in her journal conforms to the

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[80] Turner, 95.

[81] Valerie Raoul, "Women and Diaries: Gender and Genre," *Mosaic* 2:no.3 (1989): 62.

writer. The characterization of Montgomery found in her journal conforms to the common conception of the artist as an outsider surrounded by a hostile, unsympathetic environment. "The tortured self-portrait contained in the journals is perhaps Montgomery's greatest literary creation: it, too, was carefully crafted, by the same skilful hand that sketched the portraits in her novels."[82]

Although we cannot completely trust Montgomery's self-characterization, it is the form of the journal that makes this characterization possible. The journal format provided Montgomery with a degree of freedom of expression not afforded by her public fiction. Although she carefully selected the content and words that would tell her life story, and although she edited the original content, Montgomery felt free to discuss issues and feelings in her journal that would never be found in her fiction. In her journals, Montgomery could write about her unhappiness in marriage, her unconventional religious views, and her thoughts about politics. These were subjects that she must have felt inappropriate for her fiction.

> The personal diary, removed from certain demands of artistic standards and a critical public audience, liberates a freedom of expression which need not take others' strictures into account. When these factors are related to a literature produced by a sex which has traditionally been trained in suppression rather than expression, we can see a dynamic relation operating between the forms of private and public writer.[83]

Because of the sense of freedom provided by the diary format, Montgomery's journals contain a truer, more authentic portrait of the female artist, and of women in general,

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[82] Rubio & Waterston, *Writing a Life*, 117.

[83] Simons, 202.

than her fiction.

Montgomery's journals shed light on her fiction. Intertextual readings of the fiction and the journals lead to a richer understanding of the fiction. We find Montgomery's inspiration for her fiction in the pages of her journal. The fiction seems to grow out of the journal. This is particularly true in the case of the *Emily* series. *Emily of New Moon* was a direct result of Montgomery's transcription of her journal. The psychological portrait found in the *Emily* series is very similar to that found in the journal. We also see in Emily Montgomery's own construction of her self. Montgomery reconstructed her childhood through her journal. Because she destroyed her own childhood diaries, we have only her selective and reconstructed memories on which to rely. As she grew older and began to identify herself as a writer, Montgomery's childhood underwent a gradual and subtle transformation as recorded in her journal. At the outset of her first journal, Montgomery described herself as a happy, carefree, quite typical girl with a rather unusual impulse to write. Gradually, this characterization changed to a solitary, oppressed child with a unique vision of the world. Emily was created through this reconstruction. Montgomery wrote Emily as she wrote herself in her journal. Through Montgomery's journals, the reader is able to understand the motivations and inspiration for Emily. We understand more fully what drove Montgomery to lead Emily down the path of female conventionality. We understand the bleakness and lack of energy in the final novel. The *Emily* series, and *The Blue Castle*, hold greater meaning because of the journals.

As the journals provide insight into the fiction, so does the fiction provide insight

into the journals. In *Emily of New Moon* the reader is invited to understand Montgomery's own conception of the female artist. In the *Emily* series, Montgomery explores gender roles more explicitly than she does in her journal. Through her characterization of Emily, we are provided with glimpses into Montgomery's life that are not supplied by the journals. The *Emily* series furnishes clues to Montgomery the writer, a portrait not often explored in the journals. Through Emily we are allowed to witness Montgomery's own writing process, her frustrations with her writing, her doubts about her abilities, her heartbreak when a manuscript was returned from a publisher. Through her characterization of Dean Priest, the reader understands more fully the impediments to Montgomery's own writing, the barriers and prejudice that she must have faced in her own life. In *The Blue Castle*, we witness Montgomery's anger and frustration with a hypocritical and narrow-minded society. We are also allowed access to the fantasy and escape mechanisms that permitted Montgomery to face the unhappiness in her own life.

In the introduction to *Harvesting Thistles*, a collection of critical essays on Montgomery's writing, Mary Rubio writes,

> The journals give us a new context in which to read her novels, just as a study of the narrative techniques she employs in her novels will eventually give us a context for understanding the way in which she constructs her life in her journals. She has put a complex web of millions of interconnected thoughts and stories before us, and we will be long in teasing out the many strands, and in examining the ways in which truth - if there is such a thing - can be cut and shaped into varying designs.[84]

Since the publication of the journals, there has been a renewal of critical interest in Montgomery's work. No longer dismissed as a popular writer for children, L.M.

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[84] Rubio, "Introduction," *Harvesting Thistles*, 8.

Montgomery has come to occupy an increasingly important place in the literary academy. Her life and work will continue to provide scholars with fascinating subjects of study. Her journals will occupy centre stage in the continuing examination of the work of L.M. Montgomery.

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