“Life into Dry Bones”:
Emergence of the Female Artist and Community Integration in L. M. Montgomery’s Novels of Development

Laurie Stein

English Honors thesis

Oberlin College

May 16, 2006
Introduction: “Anne’s chariot wheels”

“If I’m to be dragged at Anne’s chariot wheels the rest of my life I’ll bitterly repent having ‘created’ her.”¹ So wrote Lucy Maud Montgomery (1874-1942) in September 1908, a mere few months after the publication of her first novel, *Anne of Green Gables*, which had quickly become a bestseller.² Of course Montgomery knew, and we can see with hindsight, that “Anne’s chariot wheels” were and are nothing to scoff at. Quite clearly they propelled Montgomery to popular renown, financial success and literary acclaim – both then and now. *Then*, beginning in 1908 and continuing through her career, “Anne’s chariot wheels” provided the extra financial and morale boost necessary as Montgomery, a workmanlike but improving poet and generator of short stories, toiled along toward her lifelong goal. She desperately aspired, as she put it, to climb “the Alpine path”³ – to gain noteworthy and meaningful achievement as a writer – and *Anne of Green Gables*, as her first novel and most lasting legacy, naturally entailed a most significant ascent. *Now*, *Anne* classic paperbacks, tourist attractions, and commercial products, testaments to the continued force of the chariot wheels, are coupled with a resurgence of critical interest in Montgomery that has spawned essays, publications, conferences and even the establishment of an L. M. Montgomery Institute at the University of Prince Edward Island in 1993.

But it was the very ubiquity of Montgomery’s literary association with her red-haired heroine that led to her 1908 outburst. Montgomery’s frustration regarding “Anne’s chariot wheels” derived from the fact that the writing of Anne’s second adventure, *Anne of Avonlea* (1909), was

² By October 1908 *Anne* was in its fifth edition. Carole Gerson writes that “Classed as an ‘overall bestseller’ by Frank Mott, who states that *Anne of Green Gables* had sold between 800,000 and 900,000 copies by 1947, the book had earned Montgomery over $22,000 for more than 300,000 copies by...1919.” See “Dragged at Anne’s Chariot Wheels: The Triangle of Author, Publisher, and Fictional Character,” *L. M. Montgomery and Canadian Culture*, Irene Gammel and Elizabeth Epperly, eds., (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), p. 168.
³ “The Alpine path” is a phrase taken from a poem entitled “The Fringed Gentian” (biographers have never located the author) that Montgomery cut from a magazine and pasted in her notebook as a girl, using it as her motto for her writing ambitions. She also entitled a series of autobiographical sketches she wrote for the magazine *Everywoman’s World* in 1917 “The Alpine Path.” At the centennial of her birth in 1974, it was published in one volume as *The Alpine Path: The Story of My Career* (Don Mills, ON: Fitzhenry).
proving a less satisfactory and delightful process than the first. The unforeseen popularity of *Anne of Green Gables* had brought with it pressure and expectation for an equally unforeseen sequel: a sequel in which, as Montgomery straightforwardly (and regretfully) stated, as fans reluctantly acknowledge, and as critics predictably harp upon, “Anne, grown-up, couldn’t be made as quaint and unexpected as the child Anne” (*GGL* 74). In relative terms, the *Anne* sequels maintained Montgomery’s commercial success. Public and publishers alike continued to demand them, and she produced seven in all. But Montgomery felt typecast into a specific genre, and occasionally confessed to her journal a longing to write “something entirely different.”

Though she never really breached the constraints of genre and audience, in the course of generating *Anne* sequels Montgomery did in fact hit upon a source of renewal – not once but twice – with two subsequent girls’ series which deserve to be better appreciated by critics. *The Story Girl* (1911), created after the frustrating *Anne of Avonlea*, replaced *Anne of Green Gables* as Montgomery’s personal favorite work when it was written. *Emily of New Moon* (1923), written after the fifth *Anne* sequel, in turn surpassed *Anne* and *The Story Girl* in the author’s estimation. As with *Anne of Green Gables*, with these novels Montgomery was again writing “from sheer love of it” and with “intense pleasure” (*SJ* 2: 20, 29 Nov. 1910; *SJ* 3: 39, 15 Feb. 1922). Mass audience appreciation of the *Emily* and *The Story Girl* series did pick up in the 1980s and 1990s with the publication of new editions of the novels and the production of two television series.

Yet critics, even in recent years, tend themselves still to be “dragged at Anne’s chariot wheels.” With *Anne* predominant, lesser heroines Emily and Sara (*The Story Girl*) are largely seen through her critical lens. All three series feature outsider heroines with artistic talents who must

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5 *Road to Avonlea* (Kevin Sullivan Entertainment, 1989-1996, CBC and The Disney Channel) and *Emily of New Moon* (Salter Street Films, 1998-2000, CBC). Of course, this appreciation rode the wave of renewed interest in Montgomery following the publication of the first volume of her *Selected Journals* and the release of the made-for-television film version of *Anne of Green Gables* in 1985.
forge a place for themselves in their communities. The importance and implications of such community interaction and assimilation loom largest in the *Anne* books and accordingly tend to influence the attention of critics in application to other Montgomery novels. Opinions diverge as to whether incorporation into their communities, especially in the sequels, means degeneration for Montgomery's heroines into compromised conventionality or conversely triumph as agents of relationality. Overall, though, Anne's loss of piquancy in the sequels, along with her relatively conventional journey into the domesticity of wifehood and motherhood, create an impression of what one critic terms “a failure on Montgomery’s part of both the literary and social imagination” through the growth of all of Montgomery’s heroines into adulthood.⁶

In this context a theme dear to Montgomery’s heart, the female protagonist as an embryonic artist, is grossly underemphasized. Montgomery’s journals clue us in to the depth of her preoccupation with this theme. She herself was governed by a strong artistic drive, seemingly extant in her sense of self almost since birth.⁷ Such a forceful creative impulse is also present, to different degrees, in Montgomery’s major protagonists Anne, Sara, and Emily. While predominance of *Anne* in the minds of critics typically leads them to see all of Montgomery’s heroines as fizzled-out artists following a conventional path, in fact both Emily and Sara climb to successful artistic careers. Seen through the lens of her later works *The Story Girl* and *Emily*, Montgomery’s career betrays no failure of imagination. She goes on from *Anne* to treat these heroines in a way that reflects a role for the coming-of-age female protagonist not just as a relational creature but as an artist – thus writing from much more of a feminist standpoint than she is often given credit for. Montgomery’s stress on the vigor of this artistic quality in her heroines is

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⁷ Montgomery wrote in *The Alpine Path*, “When I am asked, ‘When did you begin to write?’ I say, ‘I wish I could remember.’ I cannot remember the time when I was not writing or when I did not mean to be an author. To write has always been my central purpose around which every effort and hope and ambition of my life has grouped itself” (52).
easy to miss in *Anne*, when that series is taken by itself as it usually is. However, when viewed in conjunction with *The Story Girl* and *Emily*, a germ of the artistic dispositions that blossom in those later series can come to light in *Anne*, who is an embryonic artist in relationality.

Montgomery was right, then, to fear “Anne’s chariot wheels,” for in critics’ and readers’ foregrounding of *Anne*, something is lost. The most important angle to surface from this neglect is how Montgomery’s female artists develop in relation to their communities over the course of three series. I want to trace an important chronological progression in Montgomery’s career between 1908 and 1927, *from* her first heroine, *Anne*, *to* later ones, *Sara* and the most autobiographical protagonist, *Emily*, whose potent identity as a writer and determined journey to success represent Montgomery’s greatest literary achievement. This will involve an analysis that combines the two critical threads that I have mentioned, Montgomery’s portrayal of her protagonists growing up in relation to their surrounding communities and her portrayal of her protagonists growing up as artists. Though many Montgomery scholars have touched on a merging of these themes in individual volumes or series, few have adequately, in my view, discussed how they reciprocally bear on each other, and none have traced the convergence of these themes through these three series. I seek to reveal an alternative view of the thrust of “Anne’s chariot wheels”: one in which both author and protagonists are dragged in different directions by creative impulses, ambitions, and community standards, and negotiate these models and goals through their artistic journeys. I will show how with each successive series, starting with *Anne*, progressing with *The Story Girl*, and culminating in *Emily*, Montgomery more satisfactorily brings together two of her own formative influences, her strong sense of community and her deep-seated drive to become a writer, to create artist-protagonists increasingly bordering on her own ideal, albeit a realistic one, and works of fiction she deemed increasingly artistically fulfilling, albeit within the limitations of her genre.
A child heroine can easily be made “quaint and unexpected,” but as Montgomery came to realize with Anne, drawing a portrait of the female artist as a young woman growing to adulthood presents difficulties, since the encumbrances of female duty and societal pressures that accompany this transition tend to drive individual artistic vitality underground. Fortunately, the struggle to keep alive the capacity for creativity into maturity was one Montgomery knew well, a knowledge which translated increasingly to the pages of her novels. In all three first volumes of these series, the young heroine – orphan or half-orphan, like Montgomery herself – must balance a desire to belong, to move from her motherlessness to a more expected female status governed by relationality, with a creative ability which accentuates her individuality, granting her a sense of herself apart from the rest of the world as an artist. Montgomery navigates these issues by revealing the possibility of a mutually beneficial relationship between the female artist and her community. Her protagonists Emily, Sara, and Anne are all very much “of” a place, as two of the three first volume titles suggest, and it is the experience of growing up in this community, with both its limitations and delights, which shapes them into the artists they are.

The three series represent progressive attempts to portray this artist/community relationship, with Montgomery’s varied strategies to negotiate the tension between the two producing different degrees of resolution. This process is best realized in *Emily*, the series in which Montgomery most satisfactorily succeeds in portraying the artist as a young woman by finding, in the strength of her artistic vitality, a channel for Emily to continue as an artist without sacrificing relationality. At times humorous, at times dark, but always apt, the *Emily* series is a rendition of the determined struggle for a writing voice that was Montgomery’s own. Her earlier two volume sequence *The Story Girl* and *The Golden Road* (1913) serves as an important link in interpreting her career. Here Montgomery creates a full-fledged artist in Sara, a master storyteller and a future

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successful actress, and surrounds her with shaping family traditions and connections. Montgomery holds herself back, however, from the later force and vigor of Emily through this series’ format as a nostalgic childhood idyll. Only now, with the context of Emily and The Story Girl, are Montgomery’s goals and pulled punches in the Anne series best understood. Creative imagination dominates Anne’s childhood, but, especially as she grows up, that creativity manifests itself almost solely in social bonding. Anne then becomes not an artist in the more traditional sense, but an artist at community building. “Anne’s chariot wheels” can thus be seen as paving the way for The Story Girl and ultimately for Emily, a more potent artistic triumph written within the confines of the genre that Montgomery had first embraced with Anne.

To follow the progression I have identified through this portion of Montgomery’s career, I will trace Montgomery’s portraits of the artist as a young woman through the Anne series, the Story Girl sequence, and the Emily series in (largely) chronological succession. Though my greatest emphasis will be on the first volumes, I will also necessarily draw examples from the sequels, albeit less comprehensively. Interwoven through this will be references to Montgomery’s own artistic struggles growing up and her conception of herself as an author – a background which she drew on heavily in depicting her protagonists. Also, I will diverge from even those critics who seek to locate continued agency in Montgomery’s characterizations of her maturing heroines as I stress a form of artistry that goes beyond the “romance” component some critics have recognized, one which finds its real maturity in the grounded realism and relationality provided by integration into a community.

Viewing Montgomery’s protagonists as community-building artists within specific contexts of community and clan can provide, I think, a way of looking at what Montgomery was after in her novels, what she ultimately succeeded in imparting with driven artist Emily especially, while at the same time accounting for the particular popularity of social bonder Anne with the public at large. Focusing only on the relationality of Anne, and not on Montgomery’s emerging capability of
dealing with the female artist, leads some critics to size up Montgomery as “a writer of sentimental fiction who once had the luck to stumble on a formula that touched a universal nerve,” as T. D. MacLulich observes — in other words, as a writer who rode “Anne’s chariot wheels” on a downward slope the rest of her career (MacLulich 83). I will argue that far from being “dragged,” Montgomery was always in the driver’s seat. We can use “Anne’s chariot wheels” as a vehicle with which we can not only reevaluate the conventional wisdom regarding a popular author’s career, but also gain insight into both the struggles of the female artist and the workings of the kunstlerroman in the early 20th century.

Chapter 1 — Anne: “Making them live”

1. “Before a word was spoken Anne suddenly went down on her knees before the astonished Mrs. Rachel and held out her hands beseechingly.

   "Oh, Mrs. Lynde, I am so extremely sorry," she said with a quiver in her voice. ‘I could never express all my sorrow, no, not if I used up a whole dictionary. You must just imagine it. I behaved terribly to you — and I’ve disgraced the dear friends, Matthew and Marilla, who have let me stay at Green Gables although I’m not a boy. I’m a dreadfully wicked and ungrateful girl, and I deserve to be punished and cast out by respectable people forever. It was very wicked of me to fly into a temper because you told me the truth. It was the truth; every word you said was true. My hair is red and I’m freckled and skinny and ugly. What I said to you was true, too, but I shouldn’t have said it. Oh, Mrs. Lynde, please, please, forgive me. If you refuse it will be a lifelong sorrow to me. You wouldn’t like to inflict a lifelong sorrow on a poor orphan girl, would you, even if she had a dreadful temper? Oh, I am sure you wouldn’t. Please say you forgive me, Mrs. Lynde.’

   ... “There was no mistaking her sincerity — it breathed in every tone of her voice. Both Marilla and Mrs. Lynde recognized its unmistakable ring. But the former understood in dismay that Anne was actually enjoying her valley of humiliation — was reveling in the thoroughness of her abasement.”9

2. “You don’t chatter half as much as you used to, Anne, nor use half as many big words. What has come over you?”

   ... ‘I don’t know — I don’t want to talk as much,’ she said, denting her chin thoughtfully with her forefinger. ‘It’s nicer to think dear, pretty thoughts and keep them in one’s heart, like treasures. I don’t like to have them laughed at or wondered over. And somehow I don’t want to use big words anymore. It’s almost a pity, isn’t it, now that I’m really growing big enough to say them if I did want to. It’s fun to be almost grown up in some ways, but it’s not the kind of fun I expected, Marilla. There so much to learn and do and think that there isn’t time for big words.’” (AGG 308-309)

3. “I’m rather glad the doctor is away,’ said Owen slowly. ‘I wanted to see you alone, Mrs. Blythe. There is something I must tell somebody, or I think it will drive me mad. I’ve been trying for a week to look it in the face—and I can’t. I know I can trust you—and, besides, you will understand. A woman with eyes like yours always understands. You are one of the folks people instinctively tell things to.”10

These three passages from Montgomery’s Anne series reveal a progression in Anne’s

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9 L. M. Montgomery, Anne of Green Gables, 1908 (New York: Scholastic, 1990), p. 88-89. Subsequent references will be parenthetical as AGG.

10 L. M. Montgomery, Anne’s House of Dreams, 1917, (New York: Bantam, 1992) p. 148-149. Subsequent references will be parenthetical as AHD.
characterization that has been much commented upon by critics. In the first, the young Anne, after “flying into a temper” when confronted with the blunt observations of Avonlea’s resident busybody, Rachel Lynde, nearly does “use up a whole dictionary” in her flowery apology to that outspoken lady, while Marilla notes with irony Anne’s incongruous enjoyment of her punishment.

The second passage demonstrates a retreat inward by the adolescent Anne from her loquacious childhood speeches to more mature thoughtful silences toward the end of *Anne of Green Gables*.

By the third passage, from the fourth novel in the series, *Anne’s House of Dreams* (1917), which follows Anne after her marriage to childhood friend/enemy Gilbert Blythe, Anne’s character is no longer defined by verbal outpourings but rather by listening and “understanding,” a seeming fade into the background. Many critics tend to see this shift from chatterbox to listener as not a progression at all but a regression, into, as Gillian Thomas puts it, “dreary conformity.”

Other critics, however, have had success in reclaiming something of MacLulich’s “literary and social imagination” in Montgomery’s writing and, to an extent, in Anne herself. They have done so by probing Montgomery’s formulations of community and the artistic female heroine in her works, and subsequently granting Montgomery more innovation – or at least more imagination – than does the Gillian Thomas school in their reinterpretations of her themes and techniques. Foremost among these critics in facilitating my own analysis – of *Anne* and in the succession of Montgomery’s later series – are Susan Drain and Elizabeth Epperly.

Drain (1986) seeks to respond to the “dreary conformist” camp of Montgomery critics by noting that it is too simplistic to call Anne’s quest to belong to her surrounding community mere

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11 Gillian Thomas, “The Decline of Anne: Matron vs. Child,” 1975, *Such a Simple Little Tale: Critical Responses to L. M. Montgomery’s Anne of Green Gables*, Mavis Reimer, ed., (Metuchen, N.J.: The Children’s Literature Association and The Scarecrow Press, 1992), p. 23-24. This view is shared by critics who highlight both of the interpretative threads I have identified, the protagonist’s maturation in relation to her community and the protagonist’s growth as an artist. Thomas laments Anne’s mellowing into conventionality in the sequels, in which Anne loses her childhood distinctiveness as she is “totally absorbed in a dense social network of family and rural community.” T. D. MacLulich, though presenting Montgomery as “a more committed and a more serious writer than is generally recognized,” nonetheless deplores Montgomery as “even Anne and Emily, Montgomery’s most talented and self-willed young artists, lose much of their rebelliousness as they grow into womanhood” (MacLulich 84).
“conformity.” Belonging, Drain says, is a complex process that runs two ways, involving mutual adaptation on the part of the individual and the community and ending in a dynamic interconnectedness. Drain thus directly contradicts those who see Anne’s acceptance into “a dense social network” as disappointing or limiting: “Individuality, then, is established not in contrast to a community, but by a commitment to it, and the individual’s freedom is not in the isolation of individualism, but in the complexity of belonging.”

Epperly (1992) highlights the textual richness within Montgomery’s conventional romances, too often underemphasized or misrepresented, with an in-depth analysis of both Anne’s verbal creativity and Montgomery’s narrative technique in portraying her. She grants but finally looks beyond Montgomery’s concessions to conventionality, stating that “Perhaps Montgomery believed that conscious romance with nature/beauty/home/honour could transform the culturally conforming (auto)biography into a story of individual, private liberation” (Epperly 250). In this conclusion I find something I think both echoes and complicates Drain’s conception of the complexity of belonging by adding the substance of romance to the process – in effect, defining the individual/community relationship, Drain’s reciprocal process of belonging, as “romancing.”

But I want to take Epperly’s “conscious romance” a step further by examining Montgomery’s serial progression in characterizing and narrating the maturation of the female artist. Anne is the heroine on whom Epperly’s lens of romance is best used. With Sara and especially with Emily, Montgomery’s preoccupation with the female artistic struggle is more clearly conveyed. Since viewing this struggle merely through the lens of romance blurs its sharpness and edginess, it is here that I somewhat depart with Epperly. In starting with the Anne books, I want to...

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13 In her book-length assessment of Montgomery’s work, The Fragrance of Sweet-Grass: L. M. Montgomery’s Heroines and the Pursuit of Romance (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992), Epperly uses the lens of “the romantic,” with its tensions, conflicts and conventions, to examine all of Montgomery’s novels, focusing on the heroines’ struggles with romance and the author’s wide-ranging, vivid tapestry of romantic literary allusion. Subsequent references to this work will be parenthetical.
keep in mind the big picture of Montgomery’s interest in the female artist, and examine Anne not only as a romancer, but also as an embryonic artist who uses, yes, the conventions of romance but also other building blocks of story in her speech, in her actions, in her responses to the world, and in her relationships with others.

As the three opening passages bring to light, Anne’s artistic power is that of the tongue, a power dependent not just on quaint speeches but on the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener. Anne, as Montgomery’s narrator notes, “had a genius for friendship” (AGG 342), which she employs in brightening the lives of others with her effusive personality, in taking action to bring about happy endings to their unresolved (usually romantic) predicaments, and in evoking the life stories of others through the capacity for sympathy and understanding in her imagination. Her imaginative sympathy deepens as she matures and acquires more knowledge and understanding, gaining a reputation as a good listener rather than as a big talker.

Though only occasionally a writer, Anne still is, perhaps, an author in the most foundational sense of the term, reaching back to its Latin roots to the verb *augere*, “to increase” and its agent noun, *auctorem*, “one who causes to grow.” Montgomery seems to have had this sense of the word in mind in 1907 when writing about her own pleasures and strategies in writing: “To breathe the breath of life into those dry bones and make them *live* imparts the joy of creation” (SJ 1: 332, 9 Oct. 1907). The words are Montgomery’s to her journal, but parallels with this language in the texts of her novels suggest that here Montgomery describes not just the writing of the Anne series but also its content, its protagonist’s main task. Within the first few pages of *Anne of Green Gables* it is established by Mrs. Lynde that Green Gables, the out-of-the-way residence of staid elder siblings Matthew and Marilla Cuthbert, lacks vitality: “Mrs. Rachel Lynde did not call living in such a place *living* at all. ‘It’s just staying, that’s what,’ she said…” (AGG 4). Ruminating nine years after Anne’s arrival in *Anne of the Island*, Marilla observes “that out of her sixty years
she had lived only the nine that had followed the advent of Anne.”¹⁴ The parallels between Montgomery’s words in her journal regarding her own artistry and her words in her novels describing Anne’s transformative effect are too striking to ignore. These clues from Montgomery’s journal thus implicate Anne herself as an authoring spirit, who “breathes the breath of life” into the “dry bones” of Green Gables, of Marilla and Matthew, of Avonlea, of Four Winds and Glen St. Mary, of people and places wherever she goes. I will trace Anne’s development in this regard most closely through Anne of Green Gables and then move more quickly across the subsequent volumes.

“not if I used up a whole dictionary”

The opening chapters of Anne of Green Gables consist of the initial collisions between the imaginative 11-year-old orphan Anne Shirley and the settled predictability of Green Gables/Avonlea. These collisions, however, become collusions, precipitating a revitalized home, reciprocally beneficial relationships and the maturation of an artist. I will first focus on the encounters which initiate the development of Anne’s relationships with the novel’s three major adult characters, Matthew and Marilla Cuthbert and Rachel Lynde. We will see how Anne “breathes life” into their structured existences, while in return Matthew serves as an affectionate audience, Marilla serves as a more skeptical audience as well as an instiller of discipline, and Mrs. Lynde functions as an expressive influence for Anne as a developing artist.

Anne’s process of enlivening those around her works most evidently and quickly in Matthew. The arrival of Anne allows Matthew’s thoughtful, affectionate nature to transcend his painful shyness. This revitalization is overtly remarked upon in the humorous yet poignant chapter “Matthew Insists On Puffed Sleeves,” with the language again echoing Montgomery’s description of her own artistry to her journal. Matthew’s act of braving the perils of the general store and its fashionable female clerks to search for the pretty dress Anne’s wardrobe lacks leads Mrs. Lynde to observe, “But to think of Matthew taking notice of it! That man is waking up after being asleep for

over sixty years”” (AGG 242).

Thus the true surprise of the novel’s second chapter, “Matthew Cuthbert is Surprised,” is not that Anne is a girl but that Matthew, preternaturally shy and frightened of all women but Marilla and Mrs. Lynde, feels comfortable rather than fearful in her presence and “kind of liked her chatter”” (AGG 18). This second chapter, spanning the carriage ride from the train station to Green Gables, sets forth Anne’s verbal artistry – her “chatter,” indeed, runs on for several pages – and its power in establishing connections with and drawing out other people. Matthew’s responses to Anne’s startling queries progress from the monosyllabic “Well, I don’t know” to “Well now, yes. It always kind of gives me a thrill to see them ugly white grubs that spade up in the cucumber beds. I hate the look of them,” certainly a more expressive, if somewhat incongruous, reply (AGG 24). Unexpectedly, Matthew finds in Anne someone who draws out his best self.

Anne first confronts Marilla directly after charming Matthew on the drive to Green Gables; her real confrontation with Marilla, however, occurs episodically over the course of the entire novel, as it is the mutual development of Anne and Marilla that drives the plot. Early on Marilla is characterized as “dry” but also with potential for something more: “She looked like a woman of narrow experience and rigid conscience, which she was; but there was a saving something about her mouth which, if it had been ever so slightly developed, might have been considered indicative of a sense of humor” (AGG 6). Anne proves to be the catalyst of this development. Her incessantly romantic responses to the world infuse new life into Marilla’s practical reactions.

However, Marilla’s sense of humor is developed not only in contrast to Anne’s outlook but also in concert with it. Anne’s less romantic, more candid observations, such as her blunt appraisal of the Avonlea minister’s sermons as “not a bit interesting” and honest confession that she “didn’t listen to him very much,” strike a chord within Marilla. Though she feels she ought, Marilla cannot reprove Anne’s speeches, being “hampered by the undeniable fact that some of the things Anne had said...were what she herself had really thought deep down in her heart for years, but had never
given expression to" (*AGG* 99). Here Anne’s words afford Marilla a greater self-knowledge, a
more thorough grounding in her own identity, thus bringing her to life.

Marilla is a more complex character than Matthew, whose inner nature Anne taps on first
contact. Anne’s immediate “authoring” – revitalization – of Matthew establishes her capacity for
verbal artistry, with its elements of both expression and sympathy, so readers can trace it
throughout the book. Her “authoring” of Marilla, however, is a greater, more satisfying struggle,
one which more than anything else propels Anne herself to growth as an artist. We are given hints
throughout the novel that Marilla softens under Anne’s influence, until, by the ending, Mrs. Lynde
observes that “‘Marilla Cuthbert has got *mellow*. That’s what’” (*AGG* 370). “Mellow,” a far cry
from the original description of Marilla as “narrow” and “rigid,” encompasses two important
aspects of her development. Her relationship with Anne mellows her initial narrow, socially
ddictated conceptions about the behavior and treatment of children. Also to some degree mellowed
is Marilla’s rigidity of expression, allowing her to give vent, first secretly and finally openly, to
previously untapped maternal sensibilities. Evidence of this is seen late in the novel when Marilla
is struck by how much Anne has grown. The subsequent frank conversation – “And I was wishing
you could have stayed that little girl, even with all your queer ways” – followed by an affectionate
embrace shows how far Marilla has come (*AGG* 333).

The opening hostilities between Anne and Rachel Lynde which lead to Anne’s subsequent
apology is one of the moments of greatest “spark” in the novel. The encounter here between two
divergent – but equally powerful – modes of verbal expression render the relationship between
Anne and Mrs. Lynde fraught with artistic potential and negotiation. I am directed to consider Mrs.
Lynde as an artist partly because, as we have already seen twice, it is into the mouth of Mrs. Lynde
that Montgomery chooses to place the words most directly evocative of her conception of artistry.
Mrs. Lynde notes at the outset that Marilla and Matthew are not “living” but only “staying” at
Green Gables, and later it is she who discerns that Matthew is “waking up.” These observations
indicate a feeling for the indwelling vitality that exists within people that initially might seem inconsistent with Mrs. Lynde’s characterization. Many of the narrator’s descriptions of Mrs. Lynde are tinged with irony: “Mrs. Rachel was one of those delightful and popular people who pride themselves on speaking their mind without fear or favor” (AGG 78). At first glance, Mrs. Lynde appears to be a one-dimensional character, an insensitive though good-hearted busybody who constantly voices narrow-minded, conventional opinions. Over the course of the novel, though, readers should begin to see that it is doubly ironic – Mrs. Lynde’s energetic competence, ubiquitous presence, and pointed observations actually do make her popular in Avonlea, and her inquisitiveness and succinct, apt expressions actually do provoke delight in her audiences, both within the novel and without.15

The first meeting between Anne and Mrs. Lynde, a mutual barrage of insults, delivers a wake-up call to Mrs. Lynde herself; her vehement reaction indicates that she is unused to being thus challenged. Anne’s apology for her role in the confrontation [Passage 1] is one of the young Anne’s greatest verbal artistic triumphs. She does Marilla’s penance, and seemingly humbles herself before Mrs. Lynde, but she does it on her own terms and through her own self-dramatized expression. Further, in forgiving Anne, Mrs. Lynde acknowledges the role of her own mode of articulation in the matter, admitting “I guess I was a little too hard on you anyway. But I’m such an outspoken person. You just mustn’t mind me, that’s what” (AGG 89).

Anne’s vital presence is such that by the end of the novel Mrs. Lynde comes to admit the power and worth of Anne’s more imaginative interpretative framework. In addition to her observations about the changes in Matthew and Marilla mentioned earlier, Mrs. Lynde notes to

15 Unfortunately, too often critics largely stop at the first level of irony. Frank Davey notes that “Yet another way in which the novel signals its ambivalence about its various progressive propositions is through its gentle characterization of Rachel Lynde and the credence it assigns to many of her pessimistic or narrow observations.” Davey is correct about the novel lending “credence” to Mrs. Lynde’s observations, but I think Montgomery does this to “signal” something far more substantial than “ambivalence.” Instead she seeks to highlight Mrs. Lynde’s power of expression, especially in relation to Anne’s. See “The Hard-Won Power of Canadian Womanhood: Reading Anne of Green Gables Today,” L. M. Montgomery and Canadian Culture, Irene Gammel and Elizabeth Epperly, eds., (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), p. 168.
Marilla that she “made a mistake in judging Anne” at first. She even uses an uncharacteristically flowery metaphor, almost worthy of Anne herself: “‘But somehow – I don’t know how it is but when Anne and [the other girls] are together, though she ain’t half as handsome, she makes them look kind of common and overdone – something like them white June lilies she calls narcissus alongside of the big, red peonies, that’s what’” (AGG 300-301). Such a comparison is for Mrs. Lynde akin to a flight of fancy – here we see that Anne’s influence in bringing out imaginative vitality in the residents of Avonlea has reached even her practical doorstep.

“I don’t want to talk as much”

So far I have shown only Anne’s childhood artistry – her enlivening of Matthew, Marilla and Mrs. Lynde following their initial encounters.¹⁶ Now I will shift attention to the end of the book and focus on what is given back to Anne from these older figures. I think that what Epperly refers to as Anne’s “quieting down” can also be read – and indeed, was intended by Montgomery to indicate – a necessary step in the development of the female artist.¹⁷ Key in this is Anne’s receptiveness to seeing the older characters she enlivened not just as artistic subjects but also as mentors. Their influence on Anne deserves to be examined over and above issues of conformity. Only thus can we properly see how Anne rechannels her youthful, fanciful romance into a reality-oriented and sympathetic imaginative engagement with the stories in the world around her.

First I will provide an illustration of the development in Anne’s characterization. To me, the formation of the “story club” represents the high point of Anne’s romancing. As Anne describes a story she wrote for a school assignment to an enraptured Diana, we see that it is comically full of

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¹⁶ These encounters are succeeded by several others through the middle of the novel which repeat the process of Anne’s creative imagination and power of expression winning over members of the community. Anne fills a void in bosom friend Diana Barry’s life with imagination and romance; she adds spark to Gilbert’s life and incites his interest by rejecting his flirting and competing with him; she wins over Mrs. Barry after the unfortunate intoxication incident by saving Minnie May; she amuses Miss Barry with her speeches. The resulting relationships, though, are neither quite as reciprocal nor quite as essential to Anne’s development as an artist as the ones I am highlighting.

¹⁷ Epperly 37. She writes that, “Anne’s quieting down, two-thirds of the way through the book, suggest her tentative leanings toward the stereotypical image of womanhood that favours reserve, tolerance, self-sacrifice, domesticity, and dreamy-eyed abstraction.”
romantic clichés. Titled "The Jealous Rival; or, In Death Not Divided," it details the adventures of "two beautiful maidens called Cordelia Montmorency and Geraldine Seymour" and Geraldine's lover "Bertram Devere," and concludes with the lovers drowning in each other's arms and the villain going "insane with remorse" (AGG 254). The club that Anne, Diana and two classmates form in the following pages reveals both the extent of Anne's influence over her friends – she is helping them "cultivate their imaginations" – and the extent of Anne's romantic excess (AGG 255).

Anne's transition from childhood and this romantic excess to young womanhood and a greater receptivity and groundedness is made explicit in the chapter "Where the Brook and River Meet." Here Marilla observes Anne's maturation in a conversation that indicates not just a conventional female "quieting down" but also a new artistic consciousness. Marilla asks Anne, now 15, about the story club and Anne admits it has ceased to exist:

'...We hadn't time for it – and anyhow I think we got tired of it. It was silly to be writing about love and murder and elopements and mysteries. Miss Stacy sometimes has us write a story for training in composition, but she won't let us write anything but what might happen in Avonlea in our own lives, and she criticizes it very sharply and makes us criticize our own, too. I never thought my compositions had so many faults until I began to look for them myself. I felt so ashamed I wanted to give up altogether, but Miss Stacy said I could learn to write well if I only trained myself to be my own severest critic. And so I am trying to.' (AGG 308)

Anne has taken Miss Stacy's advice to heart, and is learning that subjecting her artistry to self-criticism as well as self-indulgence can yield a more satisfying product. She begins to see that she can just as fruitfully derive subject matter from consideration of the world around her as from the inspiration of romantic novels, and the end of the novel sees her more consciously begin to reorient herself around this reality as material for the authoring of life stories.

Significant in this learning process, of course, are her mutually instructive relationships with Marilla and Mrs. Lynde. Marilla's practicality and strict caring serves to curb Anne's

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18 Montgomery's own youthful writing experiences included a similar story club and analogous romantic stories with tragic endings. She recalls them in her journals and includes them in her autobiography in the trajectory of her development as a writer. See The Alpine Path Chapter 6, p. 52-62. Though Montgomery does not endow Anne with anything near her own writing talent and drive – that will come later with Emily – the "story club" and other delightful romantic incidents of Anne's youth can be understood in a similar trajectory.

19 Her relationship with Matthew, though not as significant or developed, also works in this framework. In Matthew Anne gains a patient listening ear, a constant champion and a generous giver of the affection her love-starved heart
indulgences and increase both her self- and other-awareness. Anne’s artistry works above all in her relationships with people, and it is through Marilla that Anne gains a sense of the reciprocity and duty entailed in such relationships. Anne and Marilla’s mutual development in the book finally comes to a voiced understanding by the conclusion with Marilla’s articulation of love and Anne’s sacrifice of her opportunity to go to college after Matthew’s death in order to take care of Marilla in her threatened blindness. When Marilla opens up enough to Anne that she is comfortable telling her about the long-ago failed courtship with John Blythe, Anne’s maturation is demonstrated: “So you’ve had a bit of romance in your life, too,” said Anne softly” (AGG 361). Anne has grown enough as an artist to evoke, value, and understand such a story. Not only has Anne become sufficiently grounded to understand this real-life romance, but she has gained Marilla’s trust enough to finally become herself the audience instead of just the talker.

It is to the influence of Mrs. Lynde on Anne’s development, though, that I want to call special attention. It must not be forgotten that Montgomery opens the entire Anne series with the words “Mrs. Rachel Lynde.” Mrs. Lynde and her mode of expression play a significant role in this novel complementing Anne. In elevating both Anne’s verbose, elevated, romantic musings and language and Mrs. Lynde’s sharp, down-to-earth observations and sayings, Montgomery reveals qualities that she values, and indeed deems vital, in the female artist. Mrs. Lynde’s observations, though occasionally pessimistic and narrow, display an insatiable curiosity, a shrewd use of words, a realistic earthiness – all traits as important in the process of authoring as are Anne’s apprentice flights of the imagination and romantic effusiveness. In the Anne series, foils to the protagonist such as Mrs. Lynde are constantly necessary to elevate all of these qualities, since Anne never fully integrates them as later protagonists Sara and Emily do.

craves. He, like Diana, provides a safe, uncritical space for Anne’s verbal outpourings — a space necessary for development of expression though not so productive of such artistic maturation on its own.

20 Like Anne, Montgomery herself had to sacrifice chances for higher education and opportunities to further her career in other locales to take care of her Grandmother Macneill, who raised her, as well as to stave off her uncle from evicting them from their beloved home.
Though a triumph, Anne’s apology to Mrs. Lynde after the confrontation at the beginning of the novel does not represent a conquest of Anne’s romance-inflected speech over Mrs. Lynde’s succinct, no-nonsense expression. On the contrary, Mrs. Lynde proceeds to become a mainstay as a textual reference point for Anne, who even as a child recognizes the power of Mrs. Lynde’s pithiness. Over the course of the novel Anne quotes her observations no less (and probably more) than 25 times, rendering “as Mrs. Lynde says” a constant refrain. In one instance, Anne comments, “‘But we can’t have things perfect in this imperfect world, as Mrs. Lynde says. Mrs. Lynde isn’t exactly a comforting person sometimes, but there’s no doubt she says a great many very true things’” (AGG 294). By this point in her development, despite her implication to the contrary, Anne seems to no longer find “comfort” only in the romance of phrases like “a perfect graveyard of buried hopes” but also in these “true things” (AGG 45).

Mrs. Lynde’s model of earthy succinctness thus teaches Anne power of expression. For evidence of Anne’s development in this regard, we must return again to Marilla and Anne’s conversation about Anne’s growth. Marilla remarks to Anne that she talks less now and uses fewer big words [Passage 2]. Anne’s response here can certainly be seen as implying a conventional female toning down – the strictures of society have turned Anne’s thoughts inward as she acquires greater self-consciousness. But we must not overemphasize Anne’s statement about “dear, pretty thoughts” and overlook the implications of her discussion of big words. Though “‘Miss Stacy says the short ones are much stronger and better,’” Anne at first found it difficult to heed her teacher’s advice: “‘I was so used to crowding in all the fine big words I could think of...But I’ve got used to it now and I see it’s so much better’” (AGG 308). This revelation is not only the fruit of Miss Stacy’s instruction but also of Mrs. Lynde’s verbal influence.

With Anne’s “quieting down” at the end of the novel, then, Montgomery is not just portraying a conventional transition from childhood to young womanhood – she is also depicting what that transition must constitute, based on her own experience, for the female artist to develop.
This involves, for Montgomery, a rechanneling of artistry, which Anne displays quite clearly following her recitation at the White Sands hotel. Unlike her friends, and in contrast to her younger self, she remains unseduced by the romantic opulence of riches and jewels:

'Look at that sea, girls - all silver and shadow and vision of things not seen. We couldn't enjoy its loveliness any more if we had millions of dollars and ropes of diamonds. You wouldn't change into any of those women if you could. Would you want to be that white lace girl and wear a sour look all your life, as if you'd been born turning up your nose at the world? ...Or even Mrs. Evans, with that sad, sad look in her eyes? She must have been dreadfully unhappy sometime to have such a look.' (AGG 331)

This Anne is no longer the "story club" Anne of Cordelia Montmorency and Geraldine Seymour and their "diamond rings" and "ruby necklaces" (AGG 253). But neither has this Anne given up all her romance – she has merely formulated a foundation on which to base it. This Anne still finds artistic inspiration in the natural world, as did the child Anne, but she also has developed superior observational powers and understanding, apparent both in her discernment of the incongruence between riches and happiness and in her perceptiveness regarding "those women's" characters.

"One of the folks people instinctively tell things to"

Though critics tend to agree with Montgomery's assessment of the end of Anne of Green Gables as "too conventional,"21 when deploring the "dreary conformity" of the older Anne, critics are more often referring to the sequels than the popular first volume.22 Montgomery's letters and journals reveal that Anne's more conventional behavior in these sequels was not merely a

21 GGL 70-71. She wrote to literary correspondent Ephraim Weber that had she known she would write sequels to Anne of Green Gables, she would have ended the novel differently: "You did not make the criticism I expected you to make and which a couple of the reviews did make – that the ending was too conventional. It was...."

22 Chronologically, the sequels run as follows: Anne of Avonlea (1909) recounts Anne's experiences as the Avonlea schoolteacher, Anne of the Island (1915) follows her to college, Anne's House of Dreams (1917) traces her first few years as a matron following marriage to Gilbert Blythe, and in Rainbow Valley (1919) and Rilla of Ingleside (1920) Anne fades to the background as a benevolent mother figure as her children and their friends take center stage. Montgomery went on to write two additional Anne sequels in the 1930s, in response to publisher and financial pressures, as well as hopes of profiting from the success of the 1934 Anne movie. Anne of Windy Poplars (1936), an account of the years between Anne's college graduation and marriage to Gilbert in which she serves as a high school principal, and Anne of Ingleside (1939), a collection of stories centering largely on Anne's children set in the period between Anne's House of Dreams and Rainbow Valley, are very episodic in nature, borrowing heavily from Montgomery's already-written supply of short stories, and are commonly seen as her weakest efforts. These novels fall outside of the period that is the scope of my inquiry and thus will not be treated, although my arguments can extend to include their characterizations of Anne as well. Rainbow Valley and Rilla of Ingleside also will not be considered since I am focusing on Anne as a protagonist. Montgomery also published a collection of previously-written short stories revised to reference Anne entitled Chronicles of Avonlea in 1912.
concession to conformity but something she actively struggled with. However, though Montgomery herself sometimes laments the necessity of subduing Anne, it would be a mistake to see either author or protagonist as lacking. Montgomery continued to write about Anne with artistic fulfillment – it was, after all, during the composition of *Anne of Avonlea* that Montgomery described the “joy of creation” to her journal. That such joy infuses even the sequels – both in Montgomery’s writing itself and in her construction of Anne’s developing artistic role – salvages them from “dreary conformity.” Although Anne’s childhood charm has diminished somewhat, she has gained a grounded receptiveness that allow her to become a more mature, confident, and even overt artist in people as she evokes and finds value in the stories of others as well as inserts herself into their unfinished plotlines to assure resolution.

*Anne of Avonlea* more explicitly deals with the 16-year-old Anne’s relationship with the larger community, as the title suggests. Epperly writes rather disparagingly of this novel: “Here Anne Shirley is a quirky, engaging adolescent in a whirl of other people and their comings and goings and sayings. Her voice is not even the most interesting one we hear” (Epperly 42). This is true. But considering this with regard to Anne’s development as an artist forces me to see the changes in Anne’s “voice” in a less disappointing light than Epperly. Though Anne’s numerous loquacious and humorous speeches are largely gone, it is important to note that the other, more interesting voices in this novel only come to be heard through Anne’s influence and instigation. Her relationships with these people are community-building – they further integrate Anne into the web of connections that is Avonlea society and, with Anne’s stimulation, they extend those webs to include others who were, like her, previously outside the fold.23

23 These voices include Mr. Harrison, a new neighbor who rivals Mrs. Lynde in outspokenness (and plays a similar role in complementing Anne with his forceful expression); Anne’s pupils at the Avonlea school, especially the imaginative Paul Irving; Davy Keith, one of the six-year-old orphan twins adopted by Marilla who supplies much of the book’s humor; and Miss Lavender, a spinster with only echoes and fancies to live on prior to Anne’s arrival in her life. With her pupils and Davy, Anne affords them space for expression and acclimates them into the community. Her interactions with Mr. Harrison and Miss Lavender go beyond this – after evoking and sympathizing with their stories of failed romance, her actions – intentional, as with the matchmaking between Stephan Irving and Miss Lavender, or
Montgomery wrote three other novels\textsuperscript{24} between *Anne of Avonlea* and *Anne of the Island*, and indeed revealed feelings to her journal that show her as quite resistant to the latter. She expresses great frustration at having to write a book in which she does not think she can fully exert her artistic talents:

\begin{quote}
I did not want to do it – I have fought against it. But Page [her publisher] gave me no peace and every week brought a letter from some reader pleading for “another Anne book.” So I have yielded for peace sake. It’s like marrying a man to get rid of him… I don’t see how I can possibly do anything worthwhile with it. *Anne* is grown-up and can’t be made as interesting as when a child. My forte is in writing humor. Only childhood and elderly people can be treated humorously in books. Young women in the bloom of youth and romance should be sacred from humor. It is the time of sentiment and I am not good at depicting sentiment – I can’t do it well. Yet there must be sentiment in this book. I must at least engage Anne for I’ll never be given any rest until I do. So it’s rather a hopeless prospect and I feel as if I were going to waste all the time I shall put on the book. (SJ/2: 133, 27 Sep. 1913)
\end{quote}

Though Montgomery does engage Anne to Gilbert Blythe at the end of the novel, with *Anne of the Island* she accomplishes more than this. She successfully integrates the relationality emphasized in *Anne of Avonlea* with a reassertion of Anne’s voice. Anne, now 18, again writes, with mixed results – her story “Averil’s Atonement”\textsuperscript{25} does not betray much development from the “story club” days, but by the end of her college years she does find success when a magazine accepts her poem. Though Anne’s writing does not progress as readers might wish, her verbal expression has undergone a visible growth to greater sophistication. Her interactions with people, too, display a greater maturation – here, at least, she has absorbed Miss Stacy’s lessons.

The final pre-1930s sequel focusing on Anne as a protagonist, *Anne’s House of Dreams*, lacks such foregrounding of Anne’s own expression – what it does reveal, though, are three major triumphs in the process of Anne’s artistry in people. Her entrance into the lives of three lonely Four Winds residents, Captain Jim Boyd, Mrs. Leslie Moore, and Miss Cornelia Bryant, is both evocative – Anne becomes audience for their stories and outlet for their venting – and provocative, as her presence as a listener as well as her actions alter the plotlines of their seemingly static lives.

unintentional, as with the Avonlea “Notes” she helps Gilbert write in the Charlottetown paper that precipitate Mrs. Harrison’s return – provide resolutions to their plotlines they could not manage on their own.

\textsuperscript{24} Kilmeny of the Orchard (1910); The Story Girl (1911); and The Golden Road (1913).

\textsuperscript{25} The romantic absurdity of “Averil’s Atonement” is brought to a rather satisfying conclusion for readers – though not for Anne – when the story ends up being used very unromantically for a baking powder advertisement.
In her "house of dreams," as she and Gilbert call their new home, Anne constructs a space where others find possibilities for expression and ultimately dream fulfillment. Anne's verbal expression has matured to provide a sympathetic silence that others feel comfortable filling. This is conveyed no more clearly than in Passage 3, when Owen Ford, a writer, comes to Anne for verbal relief. He knows Anne, "one of the folks people instinctively tell things to," will "understand" his problems.

A comparable artist-seeking-an-audience figure is Captain Jim, a "high-souled, simple-minded old man," with exciting sea-faring adventures behind him and "the gift of a born storyteller" (AHD 27, 60). He too has a distinctive mode of expression that Montgomery skillfully conveys and Anne recognizes as powerful. Captain Jim himself notes that Anne's entrance into his life has "brought back my youth for a little while" (AHD 142). Her receptive role as a repository for his stories and as a provider of an atmosphere conducive to telling them is a vital one for an author figure, and equally necessary to Owen Ford's role of composition and career. Only after both Anne and Owen perform their parts in recording Captain Jim's stories for posterity can he die in peace and fulfillment.

Leslie Moore represents Anne's greatest challenge in bringing people to life. Though clearly drawn to Anne, Leslie persists in holding something back, which Anne only fully understands when Miss Cornelia tells her the tragic story of Leslie's life. But Anne too becomes persistent, and her presence begins to draw Leslie out from her shell of bitterness. She provokes a change in Leslie's temperament and behavior that surprises Captain Jim: "'But you've helped Leslie a lot,'" he says to Anne, "'she's a different creature since you've come to Four Winds'" (AHD 103). Despite the rich reciprocity of the friendship she develops with Leslie, though, Anne initially finds something lacking: "...there was always a barrier between Leslie and herself—a constraint that never wholly vanished" (AHD 101). This barrier, based on Leslie's envy of Anne's perfect happiness, finally disappears when that happiness is marred by the death of Anne's first child. The growth Anne undergoes as a result allow her to truly access Leslie as she previously
could not, allowing her to gain “‘such a friend as I never had before’” (AHD 128). And, of course, Anne’s entrance into Leslie’s life is the ultimate catalyst in setting Leslie free from her matrimonial bonds, revealed by a plot twist to be based on a case of mistaken identity.

The sentimentalism and almost unbelievably coincidental conclusion of Leslie’s tragic romance is leavened by humor and delight of the character of Miss Cornelia. Miss Cornelia’s power of expression, her active interest in the lives of everyone in town, and her penchant for gossip all remind us of Mrs. Lynde. Montgomery adds depth to Miss Cornelia’s character, though, that she never quite reveals in Mrs. Lynde – perhaps because by this point Anne has matured enough to discern it. Miss Cornelia confesses to Anne that she’s “‘a kind of lonely soul...’” (AHD 50). She finds an audience, though, as well as a close-up example of a companionable marriage, in Anne. The surprise and humor of the ending of Miss Cornelia’s plotline save the other endings – Captain Jim’s death, Leslie and Owen’s engagement, Anne and Gilbert’s moving day – from leaving an over-romanticized impression. After spending the entire book ragging on men’s failings – when Captain Jim casts the biblical Job up to Miss Cornelia, she retorts, “‘Job! It was such a rare thing to find a patient man that when one was really discovered they were determined he shouldn’t be forgotten’” – at its conclusion Miss Cornelia announces that she intends to be married, to the shock of her friends (AHD 93). Importantly, the marriage takes place on her terms – her husband-to-be, Marshall Elliot, has finally cut off the long hair and beard he’d let grow for years due to a political bet, and he is coming to live at her house: “‘I could have had him any time these twenty years if I’d lifted my finger. But do you suppose I was going to walk into church beside a perambulating haystack like that?’” (AHD 209).

It is true that many aspects of the characterization of Anne in this novel are hard not to find disappointing. Though Anne of the Island concludes with the publication of one of Anne’s poems, we quickly find out at the opening of this novel that the extent of her literary ambitions as Mrs. Dr. Blythe will be very small. She concentrates on “the fanciful, ... the pretty” and refuses to try her.
hand at writing Captain Jim’s “Life-Book,” protesting that “it’s not in the power of my gift” (AHD 146). However, though it is a male writer, Owen Ford, who ends up writing the “Life-Book,” significantly it is Anne who hatches the plan and brings the writer and sea captain together. Here we see the real extent of Anne’s artistry – she recognizes and values power of expression and has the capacity to stimulate its growth by bringing people together.

Genevieve Wiggins notes that in Anne’s House of Dreams it is Captain Jim, Leslie, and Miss Cornelia who “carry the story,” but her dismissal of Anne’s role as passive and domestic does not completely capture what I think Montgomery was driving at in structuring the novel this way.26 Anne’s domestic life cannot be so easily separated from the interweaving stories of those three characters. That the stories of Captain Jim, Leslie, and Miss Cornelia bring richness into Anne’s otherwise conventional existence is half the point. The other half is that their stories were incomplete – in stasis – until the arrival of Anne, who acts as a catalyst in “breathing life” into their “dry bones” and authoring the stories to resolution. This authoring in turn infuses Anne’s life with “the joy of creation.”

As we can see with the development of Anne, Montgomery’s handling of conventionality in her maturing heroines was a struggle, not merely a concession or “failure of imagination.” With Anne’s “authorship” of the people around her, Montgomery preserves a sense of agency for her heroine even as Anne adopts many of the conventionalities of growing up. And after reading Montgomery’s later series, which detail the thorough grounding of Sara’s creative inspiration and the depth of Emily’s writerly outlook, we understand why Anne, as Montgomery has characterized her, grows to be an artist in people rather than a professional writer. Sara and Emily are shown to possess a powerful artistic drive which manifests itself rather differently in Anne – her main drive, revealed at the beginning of the first novel in her eagerness to be “Anne of Green Gables” – is to belong. Her artistry, her gift for verbal expression and relationships, assures that she does,

everywhere she goes – and so does everyone around her.

Chapter 2 – The Story Girl: “It lived for us”

1. “I had finished my book ‘The Story Girl.’ I was sorry to finish it. Never, not even when I finished with Anne, had I laid down my pen and taken farewell of my characters with more regret. I consider ‘The Story Girl’ the best piece of work I have yet done. It may not be as popular as Anne—somehow I don’t fancy it will. But from a literary point of view it is far ahead of it. It is an idyll of childhood on an old P.E. Island farm during one summer. I have written it from sheer love of it…. ” (SJ 2: 20, 29 Nov. 1910)

2. “The doctor’s mother was a Park Corner Montgomery… and a long-ago friend of my mother. She told me the dearest little story of her—a story that revealed her to me as nothing else has ever done—that made her real to me… It made me feel, too, that if mother had lived she and I would have been chums—we would have understood each other. … I felt as rich as a multi-millionaire when this old old lady fished up out of the deeps of her memory, so soon to be dust, this pearl for me. How easily I might never have possessed it!” (SJ 2: 250, 25 June 1918)

Montgomery’s two-volume sequence The Story Girl (1911) and The Golden Road (1913) recounts Toronto resident Beverly King’s memories of his childhood visit to his father’s Prince Edward Island home. Looming largest in Beverly’s memory is his 14-year-old cousin Sara Stanley, a gifted story-teller who later grows up to become a famous actress. This sequence is by far the least emphasized and critically acclaimed of the three series I am drawing upon, with some justice.27 Montgomery’s expressed fondness for The Story Girl in Passage 1 tends to baffle critics as they struggle to reconcile the novel’s quality with Montgomery’s assessment. Some, including MacLulich, emphasize Montgomery’s pleasure in The Story Girl as derivative of her special focus on “a childhood fantasy world” (MacLulich 88). Looking at the novel in the larger context of Montgomery’s career lends some credence to this assertion. This “idyll of childhood” was written just after meeting the pressures to move on from the “quaint and unexpected” child Anne to an older, more “conventional” Anne in Anne of Avonlea. Thus in this novel Montgomery seems to deal with the frustrations she felt in aging Anne by highlighting childhood as a special period, artistically, that can be lost the in process of maturation. Readers of The Story Girl know, from the narrator’s asides, that protagonist Sara Stanley does grow up to be a successful artist, but the

27 MacLulich calls the The Story Girl “certainly one of Montgomery’s weakest efforts,” due to the “sentimentality” and “quality of escapism” in its “rather simplistic conception of the artist” as “someone who lives in a sort of perpetual childhood” (88). Wiggins largely concurs, further elaborating on the “thin and episodic” plot and the “static” characterizations which “are sometimes amusing and sometimes monotonous” (108-109).
format of the books allows Montgomery to leave Sara in childhood and escape dealing with that maturation, a process which in the *Anne* series begat some disappointment in critics, readers and author alike.

MacLulich’s assessment of *The Story Girl* thus hits the mark to some extent. Fundamentally, however, I find that it does not serve to adequately bring forth the series’ greatest significance. Epperly comes closer to the likely root cause of Montgomery’s delight in this book, indicating that “there is more to *The Story Girl*” than the escapism or the simplicity of the novel as “an idyll of childhood”: “From the first to the last Montgomery’s fourth novel is a celebration of story and the story teller...” (Epperly 231). In Passage 2, Montgomery relates hearing a story about the mother she barely knew, revealing the depth of Montgomery’s conception of the power of story. Significantly, in this anecdote Montgomery is the audience for the tale, just like narrator Beverly in *The Story Girl*. The story-teller, old Mrs. MacIntyre, relayed a memory to Montgomery which brings her mother to life – a process we have seen before in Montgomery’s journal and in *Anne*. More than anything else, this passage gives us clues to Montgomery’s “sheer love” of *The Story Girl*. She spends the two novel sequence enlarging upon something that has the capacity to make her feel “as rich as a multi-millionaire” by showing how Sara’s family stories bring the “dry bones” of their ancestors to life for her King cousins. This is taken a step further as we see how memories of these stories enliven the middle-aged Beverly and inspire him to write them down.

*The Story Girl*, then, is not only a logical follow-up to *Anne* in that its emphasis on the artistry of childhood constitutes a response to the frustrations of Anne’s conventionality. The sequence has roots in the same conception of the artist as *Anne*, of bringing “dry bones” to life, but it develops it much more fully, especially in the characterization of Sara and in her relationship with the narrator, Beverly. Sara moves a step beyond Anne’s implicit artistry in people to a more explicit, recognizable variety, anticipating Montgomery’s most fully realized artist of a decade later, Emily. While Sara does not create stories as does Emily, the writer, she recreates them in her
oral narrations, “breathing life into” family ancestors and characters of myth. Then, inspired by remembrances of his cousin Sara, Beverly recreates these stories again in composing memoirs of his childhood. This technique of first-person narration escalates beyond Anne by allowing us to zero in on a short period in a young artist’s development through the eyes of a budding writer. Such a foregrounding of the artist grants new depth to the sequence’s overall focus on childhood as a special locus of artistry. Artists are not merely those who walk along “the golden road” of childhood or who later “remain children at heart,” as the narrator states, but also those who, like Sara and Beverly, undergo a specific childhood apprenticeship. The significance of this apprenticeship is brought into relief by the highlighting of older artist manqué figures that contribute to Sara’s development but also serve as foils to the degree of talent, drive, and training which ultimately propel her to genuine artistic achievement.

Presenting the Story Girl through Beverly’s admiring eyes, Montgomery is much more upfront here than in Anne regarding questions of artistry and what makes the artist. The characterization of Sara catalogs the components Montgomery deems necessary in the female artist: an inherent talent and a deep-seated drive that serve to focus an equally invaluable imaginative creativity, and a thorough grounding in the richness of real-life affairs gained through


29 This is underlined by The Story Girl’s chronological proximity to “Each in His Own Tongue,” a short story Montgomery had published in the October 1910 Delineator and which was later reprinted in the 1912 short story collection Chronicles of Avonlea (New York: Bantam, 1989). Montgomery refers to this story years later in her journal as “the best short story I ever wrote,” an opinion based on no doubt in part on the favorable reviews it received, including one she quotes which describes it as “one of the finest short stories in the world” (SJ 3: 23, 24 Oct. 1921). This story depicts a gifted child musician, Felix, whose minister uncle seeks to repress his talent on the violin until Felix’s playing inspires to repentance Naomi, a dying sinner, whom the minister fails to reach; subsequently the uncle learns his lesson and provides support for Felix’s artistic development. This story provides a succinct, specific delineation of Montgomery’s conception of the child artist which will be useful to draw upon. Felix’s musical ability is portrayed as both a God-given talent and a driven necessity; it is revealed to be a mode of expression — a “tongue” — which can “minister” to others where more traditional forms are found lacking. Felix’s interactions with Naomi, the broad-minded reprobate Old Abel, and his more narrow-minded uncle serve to “bring new life” to all three — most explicitly Naomi, whom Felix arouses to atonement and heaven. Further, these interactions, along with the structure that his uncle’s early repression and subsequent influence provide, supply the necessary childhood apprenticeship for future success. Parallels between this story and The Story Girl are rampant — the two most explicit are found in the descriptions of both Felix and Sara’s talents as something neither can explain and the characterization of each of their fathers as Bohemian artists who do not possess their drive and focus.
community integration and familial interaction that serves to hone romantic tendencies. Sara’s story-telling ability is shown to derive in large measure from a natural genius, the musical, magical quality of her voice. Beverly attempts to describe it upon first hearing Sara speak: “If voices had color, hers would have been a rainbow. It made words live. Whatever she said became a breathing entity, not a mere verbal statement or utterance” (SG 9). This talent is something that Sara cannot quite explain. “It just does itself,” she says on one occasion (SG 179).

Added to this innate ability is a powerful drive which impels Sara to constantly tell stories. Her gift defines her: she is known among her cousins and peers as “the Story Girl.” The deep-seatedness of Sara’s ability within her nature manifests itself most clearly, of course, in the frequency with which she tells tales. “I know a story about…” becomes a constant refrain across the two novels. Her story-telling instinct always predominates, no matter the circumstances, and she manages to find some speck of inspiration in almost any circumstance. As Beverly notes in one instance, Sara “probably would have known a story and tried to tell it if she were being led to the stake” (SG 130). Even as an unaccountable ringing resounds from inside the empty King house, prompting visions of frightful apparitions in the children, Sara cannot hold back, though her words are hardly comforting: “I know a story about a ghost,’ said the Story Girl, ruling passion strong even in extremity, ‘It is about a ghost with eyeholes but no eyes…” (SG 124). Beverly’s commentary here heightens our awareness of Sara’s artistic compulsion.

Sara’s penchant for performance extends to the actions she takes in her own life, as Beverly again makes clear to us in his reflections. Remorseful at her role in convincing Sara Ray to deceive her mother, the Story Girl elects to undertake penance, vowing to put peas in her shoes and abstain from sustenance, except bread and water, to atone for her sins:

This, we felt, was a heroic measure indeed. To sit down to one of Aunt Janet’s meals, in ordinary health and appetite, and eat nothing but bread and water—that would be to do penance with a vengeance! We felt we could never do it. But the Story Girl did it. We admired and pitied her. But now I do not think that she either

30 Of course, as Cecily explains to Beverly and Felix, this is partially to differentiate her from acquaintance Sara Ray, but largely because she’s “such a hand to tell stories” and because “she’d rather be called the Story Girl” (SG 5).
needed our pity or deserved our admiration. Her ascetic fare was really sweeter to her than the honey of Hymettus. She was, though quite unconsciously, acting a part, and tasting all the subtle joy of the artist, which is so much more exquisite than any material pleasure. (SG 84-85)

This echoes Anne’s enjoyment of the drama of her apology to Mrs. Lynde, but on a more explicitly artistic level. Sara’s recreation of herself as the ascetic penitent lends her, as Beverly notes, “all the subtle joy of the artist,” again repeating Montgomery’s language in her journal about artistic creation.

Sara’s vocal genius, driving passion and self-dramatization are all crucial ingredients in her re-creative artistry of story-telling. We see all these elements come to the fore when the children canvass Mr. Campbell for money for their school library. Having heard tell of Sara’s talents, he teasingly instructs her to tell him a story, and “I shall pay you in proportion to the entertainment you afford me” – a mockery which rouses the Story Girl’s ire (SG 51). Her comeback?

“I shall tell you the story of the Sherman girls, and how Betty Sherman won a husband,” she said. We gasped. Was the Story Girl crazy? Or had she forgotten that Betty Sherman was Mr. Campbell’s own great-grandmother, and that her method of winning a husband was not exactly in accordance with maidenly traditions. (SG 51)

Naturally, Sara’s rendition of the story, which concerns competition between two men over the hand of one woman, and concludes with the loser being proposed to by her sister, Betty Sherman, successfully charms Mr. Campbell. She makes a tale he’s heard “so often that it has no more interest for me than the alphabet” amusing and proves her ability to transform a “threadbare old story” into something more, something full of vitality – as Beverly comments, “It lived for us” (SG 51, 56). Here we see her “bring to life” long-dead ancestors. This is something she does again and again in the novel, as her family stories acclimate Beverly to a new environment and grant him a greater knowledge of his past and himself.

Sara’s choice of this particular story is revealing of something further. She shows her recognition of the underlying power, appeal, and value of such old family stories, which, despite

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31 Like many of the family tales that Sara tells (as well as those that appear in Emily of New Moon), the story of “Betty Sherman” is taken directly from Montgomery’s family annals. Both sets of couples that figure in this story were Montgomery’s paternal great-grandparents. For her own rendition of the tale, see SJ 4: 130-132, 2 June 1931.
repetition or clichéd themes, have the potential to be reinvigorated through artistic recreation based on an understanding of family connections. This recognition derives from the childhood apprenticeship she has undergone in a rich family atmosphere, collecting stories and trying them out on the audience of her cousins to see their effect. We must not overemphasize these novels’ evidence of “Montgomery’s romantic, Wordsworthian view of the artist,” as Wiggins describes it, to the point of overlooking the fact that they also undertake an examination of a period of childhood artistic apprenticeship, for not just Sara but also for narrator Beverly who goes on to write down his childhood memories in these two volumes (Wiggins 112). This apprenticeship includes a setting which provides plentiful resources and a fertile training ground, and companionship which is provocative of development.

Throughout the series, the sources from whom or from where Sara collects and learns her stories are constantly highlighted: “Aunt Olivia’s scrapbook”; “old volumes of classic myths and northland folklore”; “the old sailors of Markdale Harbour” (SG 135, 228; GR 146). This serves two main purposes. First, we gain insight into her artistic process, her re-creation. She takes the seeds of these stories and makes them flower using her special ability. Sara is drawn to would-be artists – she listens to the tales these people tell or reads the stories they collect, recognizes the worth and potential of these stories, and by adding her genius to the mix transforms them into something more – more memorable, more transfixing, more uplifting, more disturbing. Second, it shows that Sara’s muses are not the romantic imaginings and novels which inspire Anne’s story club but are rather based in King family traditions and the realities and idiosyncrasies of Island life. These provide Sara with a thorough, essential artistic grounding, a primer in the power of story, and an education in recognizing and developing lasting and universal themes.

Another significant aspect of childhood artistic apprenticeship portrayed here is the relationship between story-teller and audience. Sara’s most significant audience in the novel, of course, is ultimately Beverly, who undergoes a parallel apprenticeship in the background. The
importance of Beverly’s role in these novels – the only two in which Montgomery relies exclusively on first person narration – is often overlooked. Beverly’s two relationships with the Story Girl – the friendship forged in childhood and the memories of her, looking back as an adult – form the basis of the novels. Both of those relationships propel Beverly’s development as an artist – the Story Girl serves as a muse to his 13-year-old self, in pushing and honing his development as a writer, and to his older self, in providing the inspiration and subject matter for his current literary endeavor.  

Beverly clearly idolizes Sara and is drawn to her abilities, which, it seems, tower considerably over his own – he has talent, she has genius. But the relationship is not one-sided. In Beverly, Sara gains an audience on a similar intellectual plane to herself and she gains a confidante for sympathetic conversation.

The characterization of Beverly across the novels is rather scanty. We know he “was considered to possess a pretty knack of composition” as a boy; he serves as editor of the children’s magazine in *The Golden Road*, and before she leaves for Europe, Sara predicts he “will be a real newspaper editor someday,” who will “write books, too” (*SG* 167, *GR* 199-200). And of course we know that he grows up to write about his life in Carlisle, looking back on it with considerable longing. But overall the most important thing we learn about Beverly is that he develops a special bond with the Story Girl, apart from the other children, and that he seems to have a particular sympathy with her artistic temperament. It is through this bond and sympathy that Montgomery is able more concertedly to bring to the fore issues of the artist, resulting in a fuller characterization in certain respects than with Anne.

Surrounding Sara and Beverly are several adult would-be artists, who possess certain artistic traits but perhaps not the drive, the talent, or the opportunities of the Story Girl. Two such are Uncle Roger and Aunt Olivia, who, Beverly discovers, never had their “chance” to fulfill their

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32 This combination of youthful friendship and elder artistic reflection, then and now, is well-illustrated in the earlier quoted passage about Sara’s dramatic penance: “We admired and pitied her. But now I do not think that she either needed our pity or deserved our admiration” (*SG* 84-85).
youthful ambitions (SG 180). Though not mentors per se, these two provide significant sources of inspiration for Sara: Aunt Olivia in the numerous scrapbooks she keeps, repositories of all sorts of stories, and Uncle Roger in the tales he tells and his sardonic, humorous power of expression. Uncle Roger is quoted by his nieces and nephews almost as often as Anne quotes Mrs. Lynde. Other proto-artist figures that populate the environs of Carlisle include the town’s two main outsiders: Jasper Dale, the “Awkward Man,” and Peg Bowen, the local “witch.”33

Perhaps the most direct consideration of artist manqué occurs in the characterization of Sara’s father, Blair Stanley, who leaves Sara in the care of her relatives while traveling around the world and painting. Beverly outlines the essential differences between father and daughter:

Had [Blair] been a poor man he might have been a more successful artist. But he had a small fortune of his own and, lacking the spur of necessity, or of disquieting ambition, he remained little more than a clever amateur.... We knew that the Story Girl was thought to resemble him strongly in appearance and temperament, but she had far more fire and intensity and strength of will—her inheritance from King and Ward. She would never be satisfied as a dabbler; whatever her future career should be, into it she would throw all her powers of mind and heart and soul. (SG 70)

This description should send signals about the way Montgomery is thinking about what goes into the making of the adult artist. We realize here even more starkly the importance of Sara’s ambition and drive as well as her artistic apprenticeship in Carlisle among her dead mother’s family in providing an essential grounding.

The major significance of The Story Girl is as a link between Anne and Emily, in which Montgomery further develops in fiction her favorite theme of the female embryonic artist. She moves from Anne’s somewhat subtextual artistry in people to an explicit analysis of childhood

33 Both Jasper and Peg are described as having exhibited talent and promise in their youth but not finding outlets for their abilities they became “eccentrics.” Jasper “went to college two years... Then his father died and he stayed home with his mother because she was very delicate,” and Peg was “a good scholar” who “went to school and was a smart girl before she became crazy” (SG 46, 185). Jasper “under all his shyness and aloofness, possessed a nature full of delicate romance and poesy, which, denied expression in the common ways of life, bloomed out in the realm of fancy and imagination” (SG 165). The Story Girl succeeds at breaking down some of his barriers and he becomes something of a mentor for her, giving her books and reading his poems. Living in closer communion with nature than respectability allows pits Peg as an outcast. Her uncanny sense of insight – a very witch-like quality in the eyes of the children – and her outspokenness also differentiate her from the crowd. She notes this herself during the episode when she comes to church after a long absence, sits in the King pew with the children, and proceeds to make blunt observations about the congregation: “...the only difference between me and other folks is that I say these things out loud and they just think them” (GR 143).
artistic apprenticeship and emphasis on the power of story with the characters of Sara and Beverly. Also, since Montgomery does not have to characterize the older Sara we encounter none of the conventionality or domesticity of the grown-up Anne and are left with more of an impression of female artistic triumph. However, this triumph is somewhat undermined, since without Sara’s perspective or maturation, we are not given much insight into her struggles and negotiations, as with Anne to an extent. It is important, too, that Sara is brought to life for us through Beverly’s writing. A fully-realized characterization of the female writer, combining growth and triumph, will later be attempted by Montgomery in the Emily series.

Chapter 3 – Emily: “I have lived it”

1.) “Oh, Father dear, I have made a great discovery. I wish I had made it when you were alive for I think you’d have liked to know. I can write poetry. Perhaps I could have written it long ago if I’d tried. But after that first day in school I felt I was bound in honour to try and it is so easy. There is a little curly black-covered book in Aunt Elizabeth’s bookcase called Thompson’s Seasons and I decided I would write a poem on a season and the first three lines are,

Now Autumn comes-ripe with the peach and pear,
The sportsman’s horn is heard throughout the land,
And the poor partridge fluttering falls dead.

"Of course there are no peaches in P. E. Island and I never heard a sportsman’s horn here either, but you don’t have to stick too close to facts in poetry. I filled a whole letter-bill with it and then I ran and read it to Aunt Laura. I thought she would be overjoyed to find she had a niece who could write poetry but she took it very coolly and said it didn’t sound much like poetry. It’s blank verse I cried. Very blank said Aunt Elizabeth sarcastically though I hadn’t asked her opinion. But I think I will write rhyming poetry after this so that there will be no mistake about it and I intend to be a poetess when I grow up and become famous. I hope also that I will be silph-like. A poetess should be silph-like.”

2.) “You will not write any more of this stuff,” Aunt Elizabeth contemptuously flourished ‘The Secret of the Castle’ under Emily’s nose. “I forbid you—remember, I forbid you.”

“Oh, I must write, Aunt Elizabeth,” said Emily... “You see, it’s this way. It is in me. I can’t help it.”...

But to give up writing stories—why, Aunt Elizabeth might as well have asked her to give up breathing.” 
(ENM 306-307).

3.) “Sentence after sentence leaped out at her—witty, poignant, beautiful. No, that was only her fond, foolish, material delusion. There was nothing of that sort in the book. Dean had said so. And her book people. How she loved them. How real they seemed to her. It was terrible to think of destroying them. But they were not real. Only ‘puppets.’ Puppets would not mind being burned. ...

“Nothing of her book, her dear book that had seemed so wonderful to her, but ashes—a little, pitiful heap of black ashes. Could it be so? Where had gone all the wit and laughter and charm that had seemed to flicker in its pages—all the dear folks who had lived in them—all the secret delight she had woven into them as moonlight is woven among pines? Nothing left but ashes. Emily sprang up in such an anguish to regret that she could not endure it. She must get out—away—anywhere. Her little room, generally so dear and beloved and cozy, seemed like a prison.”

34 L. M. Montgomery, Emily of New Moon, 1923, (New York: Bantam, 1993), p. 98-99. Subsequent references will be parenthetical as ENM. Emily’s first poetic endeavor related here, as well as the reactions it receives, are identical to Montgomery’s. See The Alpine Path, p. 53.
35 L. M. Montgomery, Emily’s Quest, 1927, (New York: Bantam, 1993), p. 52-53. Subsequent references will be
Emily of New Moon (1923) and its sequels often seem lost in Anne’s shadow and are not given the extent of critical consideration that they deserve. The true significance of the Emily series comes to light only by reading it closely alongside Anne and The Story Girl. In so doing, we see how issues involved in female artistic development are clearly at the forefront of Montgomery’s mind in all three series. However, as the three epigraphs indicate, the Emily series sharply differs from the previous two in foregrounding the vibrancy and personality of the heroine’s voice as a writer and featuring the darker intensity of her artistic struggle. Passage 1 is extracted from one of the first letters Emily writes to her dead father, a delightful device which to a large extent carries the book. In Passage 2 the confrontation with Aunt Elizabeth reveals Emily’s fierce need to write – it is a life and death matter to her. Passage 3, from the final installment in the trilogy, Emily’s Quest, conveys the older Emily’s devastation when Dean Priest, whose judgment she trusts, kills her faith in her first novel and in her writing ability.

Here we see a continuation of echoes to Montgomery’s conception of artistry, with “breathing” and “making characters live” significantly connected to Emily’s authorship. But we move from charming chatterbox and sympathetic listener Anne and driven vocal performer Sara to Emily Starr, a writer whose voice bursts with so much vitality that we have to encounter her writing directly. Here, Emily’s passionate drive to write subsumes (but does not erase) the elements of relationality foregrounded in Anne, and for Emily the apprenticeship highlighted in The Story Girl progresses beyond childhood to struggles for a professional foothold and finally a successful career. In the Emily series, her greatest literary achievement, Montgomery combines facets of the parenthetical as EQ.

36 Since in Emily Montgomery’s examination of the female artist is overt and forms the backbone of the series (unlike its subtler manifestation in Anne and seeming simplification in The Story Girl), when critics — such as Epperly, Wiggins, and Judith Miller — do look at Emily they more often hit the mark with regard to Montgomery’s concern with artistic development than with the other two series. However this happens all too seldom. Just as often, critics like MacLulich fail to differentiate Emily enough from Anne or underestimate the degree of Emily’s artistic autonomy. 37 After Emily, Montgomery seems to stray from directly confronting issues of the developing female artist in her novels. Later protagonists Valancy, Marigold, Pat and Jane all possess typical Montgomery heroine characteristics (imagination, sensitivity to nature, etc.) but none of them are artists to the extent of Emily, Sara or even Anne. Emily seems to have presented the limit of what Montgomery could write about the female artist within her typical genre.
two previous models—Anne’s maturation in the face of the societal pressures of womanhood with Sara’s deep-seated artistic drive and ancestral inheritance—to produce in Emily her most fully developed female artist, the one into whose psyche readers delve the deepest. Montgomery offers in *Emily* a serious look at the struggles of a woman writer striving to establish herself in her chosen profession and struggling to maintain autonomy of voice.

Consideration of the context of this portion of Montgomery’s career can shed light on her turn to a more serious examination of the female artist in *Emily*. Montgomery’s narrative in her journals of her legal battles with ex-publisher L. C. Page of Boston in the 1910s and 1920s has strong feminist overtones:

“...my chance of winning is not good...But there is *something* in me that will not remain inactive under injustice and trickery.... Besides, the Page Co. need a lesson. They have traded for years on the average woman’s fear of litigation and the fact that very few authors can afford to go to law with them... They have done the most outrageous things to poor authors who can’t afford to seek redress.” (SJ2: 375, 9 April 1920)

Written a decade and a half after *Anne*, the *Emily* novels are also set a bit later than *Anne*, at the turn of the century. This, combined with Montgomery’s legal experiences and self-assertions, contributes to the much more modern outlook on women in *Emily* and subtly reflects ways in which Montgomery, despite her self-avowed conservative tendencies, has moved with the times.

Montgomery also shifts to a darker tone in the *Emily* novels. Deeply affected by the horrors of the Great War, by the time of its cessation she felt removed from Anne, who “belongs to the green, untroubled pastures and still waters of the world before the war” (SJ2: 309, 11 March 1919). Even with the war’s end, 1919 was “a hellish year” for Montgomery, with the death of her beloved cousin Frede and her husband Ewan’s nervous breakdown from religious melancholia (SJ2: 321, 1 Sept. 1919). Given all this, by 1920 her frustration with *Anne* sequels—already acute by

38 Unlike most authors, of course, Montgomery could afford to go to law with them. The legal war began in 1916 when Montgomery, dissatisfied with her contract with Lewis Page, among other things, authorized her new Canadian publisher, John McClelland, to negotiate a better deal with another American firm, which he did, with Frederick Stokes. The drama, which lasted well into the 1920s and even reached the U. S. Supreme Court, included mixed victories and several plot twists and turns: suits for royalties and countersuits and appeals, Page bringing out an unauthorized sequel to *Chronicles of Avonlea* (imaginatively titled *Further Chronicles of Avonlea*) with unused short stories from the former, arguments over what constituted Anne’s “Titian red” hair, Page selling the film rights to *Anne of Green Gables*, etc. Montgomery did, however, eventually ended up receiving a settlement of nearly $18,000.
1913 – had magnified. Upon writing the last chapter of the fifth sequel, *Rilla of Ingleside*, she declared in her journal, “I am done with *Anne* forever—I swear it as a dark and deadly vow.”

Montgomery then went on to discuss her post-Anne aspirations:

I want to create a new heroine now—she is already in embryo in my mind—she has been christened for years. Her name is *Emily*. She has black hair and purplish gray eyes. I want to tell folks about her.

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. I have the plot of it already matured in my mind. The name of the book is to be “Priest Pond.” If I only had time to go work on it—time and leisure. But I haven’t as yet. The boys are too young—there are too many insistent duties calling me—I can’t give up my profitable “series” until I have enough money salted down to give the boys a fair start in life—for my “real” novel will not likely be a “best seller.” (SJ 2: 390, 22 Aug. 1920)

Seemingly Montgomery, hindered by such “insistent duties” and the lure of “profitable series,” never did go on to write this particular book “dealing with grown-up creatures.” However, one wonders about the extent to which she may have folded these two aspirations into one result with the *Emily* series—especially since those novels include a locale, though not a significant one, called “Priest Pond.” Does this represent the ultimate resignation of her hopes to write a “real novel,” or is *Emily* it? Where *Anne* fleshes out communities as *Anne* revitalizes them and *The Story Girl* centers on Sara’s family circle, in *Emily* Montgomery finally zeros in to focus on the individual with an artistic identity—close, perhaps, to “a psychological study of one human being’s life?” As such, its greater depth, its intense portrayal of restlessness and suffering and loneliness along with triumph and humor and delight, forces this series to sit rather uneasily within the boundaries of Montgomery’s usual genre catering charmingly to girls—an incongruence which can partially explain *Anne’s* greater popularity.

Significantly, for Montgomery herself writing *Emily of New Moon* constituted her greatest artistic triumph, as she affirmed in her journal upon completing it in 1922:

Today I have 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*.

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39 Of course, Montgomery wasn’t done with *Anne* and went on to break that vow in 1936 when financial pressures, the success of the 1934 *Anne* movie and encouragement from her publishers combined to compel her to return again to *Anne* with *Anne of Windy Poplars*.

40 Though two of her later novels, *The Blue Castle* (1926) and *A Tangled Web* (1931), are written more for adults, neither quite answers to this description.
have lived it, and I hated to pen the last line and write finis. (SJ 3: 39, 15 Feb. 1922)

Six months was the shortest period Montgomery had spent on a novel, though Emily of New Moon was one of her longest. After slogging through the later Anne sequels, Montgomery again found “intense pleasure” in her fiction — Emily, like The Story Girl and Anne of Green Gables before it, brought artistic renewal.

Montgomery’s comment that she lived this novel carries an extra layer of meaning with reference to its degree of autobiography. Though settings, stories and incidents from Montgomery’s experiences, observations, and family history pepper Anne and The Story Girl, Emily’s life most markedly parallels Montgomery’s own — she already had lived this novel, to an extent. Amidst her troubles in 1919 Montgomery embarked on the somewhat nostalgic, comforting task — which would encompass most of the rest of her life — of recopying all her old journals, starting with her girlhood, into uniform-sized ledgers, an endeavor which likely precipitated the novel’s composition. Much of the material for the Emily novels derives from these journals, especially that centering on the steps of Emily’s development as a writer. This autobiographical quality serves to enhance the novels’ quality. Through her journals, Montgomery gained even greater immediacy with her youth, thus further accentuating one of her greatest strengths, her ability to reproduce the girlhood mindset and voice. The technique employed in this series, especially in Emily of New Moon, in examining the female artist represents Montgomery at her most masterful: the charm and aptness of Emily’s letters to her father; the combination of naiveté and growing self-awareness of Emily the writer with whose perspective we remain closely aligned; the ironic detachment with a hint of earnest nostalgia in the narrator who’s been there.

With the Emily series, Montgomery reveals how the female artist must navigate influences and strictures, picking and choosing and forging and suffering her way through without losing her sense of self or her voice. Montgomery brings that voice to the forefront in such a way that readers cannot help but be drawn to its vitality, be struck with its acute insight, and be delighted by its
humorous naiveté or ironic observation – in short, be impelled to identify with and value the struggles of the female artist. The three Emily novels cover distinct portions of Emily’s development as a writer. Emily of New Moon depicts the newly orphaned Emily struggling to find her voice in her new family context as she becomes more aware of herself as a writer. In Emily Climbs (1925) she tests and cultivates her voice amidst pressures and advice and models and conventions, as she climbs to her first successes as a published writer. With Emily’s Quest (1927), Montgomery as starkly confronts the limitations of Emily’s career path as a female artist as she can within the confines of the genre, sounding a muted note of triumph in Emily’s eventual artistic partnership with Teddy and the publication of her first novel.

**Locating the voice**

The early chapters of Emily of New Moon immediately contain clues that Montgomery is moving to explore depths beyond Anne and The Story Girl. The novel opens with the death of Emily’s father and the seizure and burning of her writing notebook. In his good-bye to his ten-year-old daughter the fatally ill Douglas Starr, a former newspaperman, positions himself as an artist manqué figure: “You have my gift—along with something I never had. You will succeed where I have failed, Emily” (ENM 12). We have already learned that this “something” is Emily’s heritage from her dead mother’s family, the Murrays, who, like the Kings in The Story Girl and like Montgomery’s own family, are portrayed as “the Chosen People” with a rich Prince Edward Island history: “Emily had inherited certain things from her fine old ancestors—the power to fight—to suffer—to pity—to love very deeply—to rejoice—to endure” (ENM 155, 11).

The arrival of these Murrays for a family conclave at the funeral to decide the orphaned Emily’s fate precipitates the notebook burning, seen by Emily as a second fatality. That her Murray aunts and uncles have to draw lots to determine who takes Emily again underlines how far we’ve come from Anne. There will be little easy charming of repressed but ultimately affectionate grown-ups for Emily – here we see complex or less sympathetically characterized adults. This underscores
the more challenging nature of these novels in relation to their more crowd-pleasing predecessors. When Aunt Elizabeth, Emily's established guardian, discovers and demands to read the little yellow account book in which Emily records her thoughts and fancies, Emily snatches it away and burns it rather than surrender her privacy: "Emily watched it in agony. It seemed as if a part of herself were burning there. ... She watched the leaves shrivel and shudder, as if they were sentient things, and then turn black. ... Emily sat down by the stove and cried. She felt as if she had lost something incalculably precious" (ENM 47).

When Emily, like Anne and Beverly, is transplanted into new surroundings, she has to do it without the easy affection of a Matthew or a welcoming circle of King cousins. More importantly, without her father as a mentor and her account book, Emily must also reinvent herself as a writer. For a writer she certainly is. Like story-telling with Sara, writing is described as Emily's "ruling passion" (ENM 241). Her constant burning to "write it all out" echoes Sara's refrain of "I know a story..." but takes it a step further, since while we must imagine Sara's golden voice, we witness Emily's writing voice gush forth from the page (ENM 264). The early love for writing fostered by her father develops into a fierce need, a compulsion, and a career goal on which to support herself.

After Aunt Elizabeth's actions force Emily to destroy her account book, she immediately composes a line in "an imaginary account book": "Aunt Elizabeth is cold and hawty; and she is not fair" (ENM 48). Emily keeps this up for weeks in adjusting to New Moon, though "there were times when she felt she would burst if she couldn't write out some of the things that came to her" (ENM 90). Fortunately, soon she is presented with a windfall of luxurious paper in the form of "letter-bills" with "lovely blank backs for writing on" left over from when her grandfather kept the post office (ENM 92). Used to unburdening herself by telling everything to her father when he was alive, Emily decides to write to him, addressing her letters to "Mr. Douglas Starr, On the Road to Heaven" (ENM 93). These letters, the first of which is extracted in Passage 1, represent a vital step in Emily's growth as a writer. Whereas before her father read all her scribblings, now she has to
begin to imagine an audience, to learn to write her most vital outpourings into a void — though it is a void she still connects with her father, who becomes her muse. Her writing self is still formulated here in relation to her father, as she adjusts to life at New Moon without him, but she is also on her way to developing a more independent voice. The letters also clearly convey a distinct charm of voice, combining prematurely adult perceptions with word choices and spelling mistakes that both remind us how young Emily is and show a spot of artistic flair from Montgomery.

It becomes clear that New Moon and the surrounding community of Blair Water offer both benefits and challenges as a writer’s locale. Taunted by classmates on her first day at school for her lack of the more conventional feminine accomplishments, Emily is compelled to articulate her ability for the first time, to define herself as a writer: “I can write poetry,’ said Emily, without in the least meaning to say it. But at that instant she knew she could write poetry” (ENM 80). By the middle of the book, though, Emily gains a circle of friends who acknowledge her writing talent and who are of similarly driven or artistic temperaments. As is typical for Montgomery’s artistic children, none of them have two parents: Perry Miller, the New Moon hired boy, is an orphan like Emily; Ilse Burnley’s father has neglected her since the mysterious tragedy of her mother’s death; Teddy Kent’s mother has smothered him since becoming haunted upon losing her husband. Emily writes to her father of their ambitions:

“[Perry] thinks he will be a lawyer when he grows up and go to parlament. Teddy is going to be an artist if his mother will let him, and Ilse is going to be a concert reciter—there is another name but I don’t know how it is spelled—and I am going to be a poetess. I think we are a tallented crowd” (ENM 154).

Though both Perry (through his humble origins) and Teddy (through his tragically obsessive mother) encounter some obstacles in their goals, their comparative ease in relation to the negotiating that Ilse and Emily have to undertake forms an underlying motif in the series.

These friendships are instructive in noting the more serious turn Montgomery takes with this series. The “tallented crowd” lacking parental guidance directly highlights childhood artistic apprenticeship. We see these four push, support, and inspire each other throughout the series.
Emily’s relationship with Ilse in particular is far more interesting than Anne’s “bosom friendship” with Diana and even than Beverly’s idolizing of Sara – the only relationship in the Anne novels which approaches the Emily/Ilse dynamic is between Anne and Leslie. Emily is instantly attracted to Ilse’s uniqueness, her strange independence in action and speech and her disregard of conventions. As a writer, Emily finds herself drawn to challenging, unusual people like Ilse, whose quick temper and fluent name-calling intrigue her. She writes to her father,

“We fight about once a week but we make up right away and Ilse says things would be dull if there was never a row. ... She calls me dreadful names. Yesterday she called me a lousy lizard and a toothless viper. ... 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 properly. I wish I could use some of her words because they are so striking.” (ENM 126-127)

Like Emily, Ilse is also fascinated by language, though orally, like Sara; her artistic success comes in speaking someone else’s words, whether quoting her father’s rages or reciting. Her lack of control and directness are good for Emily, preventing her from sliding into self-satisfaction.

New Moon’s charm, the many Murray traditions, and the family stories that Cousin Jimmy tells also prove beneficial to Emily, making for a rich, inspiring but regulating atmosphere, much like that which provided the foundation for Sara and Beverly’s artistic apprenticeships in The Story Girl. Described as “not all there” after a youthful tumble into the well ruined his prospects, Cousin Jimmy as a proto-artist discerns and abets the artistic impulse in Emily, particularly by giving her blank writing tablets (she christens them “Jimmy-books”). Though the new regulation, strictures and conventions Emily encounters under Aunt Elizabeth’s charge at New Moon set limits and precipitate conflict, they do not prove silencing for someone with Emily’s drive. Indeed, we become all the more aware that this place presenting Emily with obstacles turns out to be her grounding point when she leaves New Moon to visit her Great-Aunt Nancy at Wyther Grange, a setting characterized by its freedom and abandon. Here the narrator is strongly judgmental of Great-Aunt Nancy’s loose tongue in the presence of Emily’s childhood naiveté: the “total disregard for her youth” was “fascinating” for Emily, but it also “made her feel very unhappy somehow, as if
something very ugly were concealed in the darkness of the pit they had opened before her innocent eyes” (*ENM* 255). Though Emily becomes distressed and haunted upon hearing the adulterous story behind the mystery of Ilse’s mother, the incident is also portrayed as contributing toward a necessary loss of innocence and step toward maturation that perhaps she could not have gained at New Moon – upon her return “she was no longer wholly the child…all had combined to mature her intellect and emotions” (*ENM* 282). However, Emily’s acknowledgment of a preference for New Moon’s traditional, old-fashioned candles over the lamps at Wyther Grange signal inklings of a realization that the structures of New Moon best keep her on track (*ENM* 281).

In introducing the character of Dean Priest, the Wyther Grange setting (situated near the locale of “Priest Pond”) provides another encounter between innocence and experience with mixed implications for Emily. Dean – 36, well-off and well-travelled, bookish and cynical, called Jarback by his clan due to his malformed shoulder and slight limp – and Emily are instantly intrigued by each other. Dean’s friendship and mentoring broaden Emily’s horizons but the forebodingly romantic overtones of his interest in her indicate that this relationship also could threaten to pull Emily off course. His remark that Emily’s life now belongs to him (after he saved it) and Emily’s responding “odd sensation of rebellion” foreshadow Dean’s ultimate role as a restrictive patriarchal influence (*ENM* 271).

With the painful but educational experience of Wyther Grange behind Emily, the novel enters its denouement as we see a more self-aware Emily grow and gain confidence as a writer. Now capable of self-criticism, she voluntarily burns much of her early work as a rite of passage. She makes a vow (like Montgomery) to “climb the Alpine Path” (*ENM* 290), attempting right away to gain a foothold by submitting a poem to the Charlottetown *Enterprise*. When it doesn’t appear, “it took her a week to recover from the blow. Then she wrote a story in which the editor of the *Enterprise* played the part of a dark and desperate villain who found lodging eventually behind prison bars. This got all the venom out of her system” (*ENM* 303). Her “ruling passion” is not
daunted by the setback but rather deals with it through more writing. Neither is it overcome by Aunt Elizabeth’s discovery of her stories and letters to her father, resulting in a threatened prohibition on writing, quoted in Passage 2. The confrontation brings the two—alike in pride and determination if not in temperament—to a greater understanding. It also proves provocative of Emily’s realization of her growing autonomy as a writer: “But when she again tried to write a letter to her father she found that it no longer meant anything to her. The sense of reality—nearness—of close communion had gone. Perhaps she had been outgrowing it gradually, as childhood began to merge into girlhood” (ENM 314). Having finally forged a true place for herself as a writer at New Moon, Emily no longer needs such “close communion” with her father to write.

The fullness of Emily’s development is marked at the end by two events. In the first, Emily is shown to possess something of “the second sight” as she extraordinarily puts together the truth about Ilse’s mother, thus reconciling the embittered Dr. Burnley to his daughter. This psychic gift might seem like an outlandishly romantic device and a strange intrusion on the narrative, but it is clearly something that Montgomery wants to associate with the strength of Emily’s artistic spirit. Almost with relief, though, do we return to the novel’s normal trajectory in the final chapter, titled “Emily’s Great Moment.” Here Emily’s teacher, Mr. Carpenter, who finds revitalization from his own failures in the talents of Emily, Ilse, Teddy and Perry, reviews some of Emily’s poems before accidentally opening a second book which contains her casual scribblings. His critiques of Emily’s poetry must have been a delight for Montgomery to write, looking back to her own youthful poetry: “‘Sunset—Lord, how many poems have been written on “Sunset”’”; “‘Girl, you’ve used purple twice in the same poem’”; “‘September—is there a month you’ve missed?’” (ENM 331-335). However, much to the surprise of a horrified Emily, he is far more impressed by what he finds in the second book, which includes “sketches of everyone in Blair Water—and a full—very full—description of Mr. Carpenter himself. Intent on describing him exactly, she had been as mercilessly lucid as she always was...”:
Thanks to her dramatic knack of word-painting, Mr. Carpenter lived in that sketch. Emily did not know it, but he did—he saw himself as in a glass and the artistry of it pleased him so that he cared for nothing else. ... And there were some sentences in it—“He looks as if he knew a great deal that can never be any use to him”—“I think he wears the black coat Mondays because it makes him feel that he hasn’t been drunk at all.” (ENM 337).

He is shocked by her ability but we are not, having seen the vitality of Emily’s voice and the occasional depth of her insight in her letters to her father. Significantly, Emily’s success here is portrayed in a familiar light, in her ability to bring characters to life in her writing.

Exalted by Mr. Carpenter’s commendation of her work, Emily gives vent to her feelings at the novel’s close in the usual manner, though also indicating the extent of her development:

She was so full of rapture that she must write it out before she went back from her world of dreams to the world of reality. Once she would have poured it into a letter to her father. She could no longer do that. But on the table before her lay a brand-new Jimmy-book. She pulled it towards her, took up her pen, and on its first virgin page she wrote.

New Moon, Blair Water, P. E. Island. October 8th.
I am going to write a dairy, that it may be published when I die. (ENM 339)

The final image of a “virgin page” has a distinctly similar tenor to the “bend in the road” and “curve of the road” images that conclude Anne of Green Gables and The Golden Road, but it moves beyond them in highlighting the mindset of the writer (AGG 373, GR 213). As Epperly notes, “The novel closes with Emily confident she has a story of her own and a voice to tell it” (Epperly 154). That voice has found a particular place for itself at New Moon, though the spelling mistake reminds us that Emily is still young and has a long upward slope in front of her.

Cultivating and mastering the voice

Of course Emily II isn’t half as good as New Moon. 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 really are; so my books of 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 realities and reactions of life are quite unknown. Love must scarcely be hinted at—yet young girls in their early teens 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’m just saying what one of the Vanderbilts said. I’m not saying it myself. I can’t afford to damn the public. I must cater to them for awhile yet. (SJ 3: 157, 20 Jan. 1924)\(^4\)

Though Montgomery bemoans the fact that she can’t write the adolescent Emily “as she

\(^4\) Since her husband’s religious melancholia, though naturally hidden from his congregations, made his dependability as a bread-winner erratic (not that his minister’s salary was great shakes anyway), Montgomery’s income from writing sustained her household, educated her sons, and supported a goodly number of extended family members as well, rendering “damning the public” impractical and impossible.
really is,” her protagonist in *Emily Climbs* certainly isn’t “insipid” like Anne becomes to an extent in *Anne of Avonlea*. Again, the vibrancy of Emily’s writing voice is striking, here in the form of diary entries that carry the novel. This vibrancy, along with the interest of Emily’s professional development as a writer, are both rendered more acute by Montgomery’s study of her own girlhood journals and the clear parallels with her own experiences. As noted by Judith Miller (a rare commentator on the *kunstlerroman* in Montgomery’s fiction who works only with this book), *Emily Climbs* is a novel that directly traces literary apprenticeship, “as Emily sorts her way through possible models, teachers, and mentors.”

Since Mr. Carpenter, Cousin Jimmy, and Dean largely continue to play their same roles from the first book, I will not spend time reiterating their influence. Rather, I will focus on Emily’s development in relation to her inner growth and her responsiveness to a few less obvious female models. Though Emily worries about failing to write in keeping with Mr. Carpenter’s advice, especially with regard to “italics,” “wandering from my subject,” and “wasting words,” we quickly see that she has developed implicit confidence in her writing voice in her diary. It also becomes clear that Emily has progressed to a greater consciousness as to where her true writing talent lies.

She writes,

> "I feel more like writing poetry in spring than at any other time. Mr. Carpenter tells me to fight against the impulse. He says spring has been responsible for more trash than anything else in the universe of God. Mr. Carpenter’s way of talking has a tang to it." (EC 26)

Though seemingly writing here of Mr. Carpenter’s literary suppression, Emily turns it into something else in recognizing the appeal of his force of expression. She uses that same word again, “tang,” in describing the tenor of the delightfully incisive, insightful observations she inwardly

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42 Judith Miller, “Montgomery’s Emily: Voices and Silences,” *Studies in Canadian Literature*, v. 9.2 (1984), p. 158. Subsequent references will be parenthetical. This article functioned as what Helen Sioubras refers to as “a precursor to new mode of thought in Montgomery criticism,” anticipating the more serious turn with the publication of the journals in 1985. Unfortunately, it did not beget the degree of upswing in attention to the artistry in *Emily* that one might wish, possibly countered by the renewed interest in and popularity of *Anne* after the 1985 movie. See Sioubras, “L. M. Montgomery: Canon or Cultural Capital?,” in Irene Gammel and Elizabeth Epperly, eds., *Windows and Words: A Look at Canadian Children’s Literature in English*, (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1989) p. 131-142.

makes about the surrounding people while bored during prayer meeting: "I must write all these
things down in my Jimmy-book tomorrow. They are fascinating—but, after all, I like writing of
beautiful things better. Only—these things have a tang beautiful things don't have some way" (EC
42). Emily's ability to identify, label, and voice such "tang" exemplifies her development from
Anne, who can recognize and quote Mrs. Lynde's power of expression, but does not name it or
possess the capacity for such power herself.

This novel follows Emily, age 14, and her quartet through three years at Shrewsbury High
School. Emily is only allowed to go after making a compact with Aunt Elizabeth, who still
disapproves of her literary tendencies, that she will give up writing fiction of any kind for the
duration of her schooling and confine herself to facts. This promise, though limiting, actually
serves to improve Emily's writing, as she later acknowledges. Here we see irony in the fact that
Aunt Elizabeth's restrictions only bolster the gift she is trying to suppress. However, it is also
important that, whatever the intention, it is Aunt Elizabeth's female influence which provides the
impetus for Emily to hone her ability here rather than Mr. Carpenter's or Dean's.

We later see that it is another woman, as Miller notes, who becomes "the most effective and
influential model for Emily" in this novel (Miller 7). Mistress McIntyre's delightful tale, related
with a Highland Scottish lilt, of how she is "The Woman Who Spanked the King" thrills Emily,
who immediately recognizes its power and charm. She asks the old woman's permission to write
the story down and publish it, which fulfills a lifelong dream of Mistress McIntyre's.

"You will be writing it out and you will be putting it into proud words—"
"No, no," said Emily quickly. "I will not do that. I may have to make a few changes and write a
framework, but most of it I shall write exactly as you told it. I couldn't better it by a syllable."
"It iss only a poor, ignorant body I am, and I will not be choosing my words fery well, but maybe
you will be knowing best." (EC 197)

This episode reveals that Emily has come to a full understanding of both the power of voice and the
significance of autonomy in voice. In writing the story, Emily (compelled in part by her compact
with Aunt Elizabeth) lets Mistress McIntyre tell her own tale in her own voice. As Mr. Carpenter
comments later when the story is published and acclaimed, Emily’s lack of polish “shows the artist” and “makes it hers” (EC 263).

Emily’s choice at the novel’s end to remain at New Moon rather than accept the “splendid chance” of a position at a magazine in New York shows that she has finally come into a true awareness of herself as a writer (EC 305). She recognizes that in order for her to do anything worthwhile, “the Alpine path can’t be “made easy,” it has to be a “hard climb” with “hardships and discouragements” and elects to “make her own chance” instead (EC 305, 301). Agonizing over the choice, Emily finally realizes that “I belong to New Moon—I stay among my own people” (EC 309). This space that she has carved for herself at New Moon is, significantly, a uniquely feminine space, with the farm presided over by Aunt Elizabeth as matriarch. Emily’s words in her refusal of the offer to an incredulous Miss Royal are revealing: “I’ll create my own atmosphere. And as for material—people live here just the same as anywhere else—suffer and enjoy and sin and aspire just as they do in New York. … Some fountain of living water would dry up in my soul if I left the land I love” (EC 310-311). Readers see that it is ironic that Miss Royal, who came back to P.E.I. to meet the author of “The Woman Who Spanked the King,” seeks to remove that author from the very fountain which produced the well-spring of her success. Emily understands that her writing voice is inextricably tied to her connections with the people and places around her – they inspire her, and she is uniquely suited to give voice to their “suffering and enjoyment and sin and aspiration.”

After this assertion of Emily’s autonomy of voice, Emily Climbs ends on a more mixed note. Emily’s first diary entry includes a dramatic declaration that Aunt Elizabeth “need not be afraid that I will ever elope,” like her mother – “I shall be wedded to my art” (EC 6). The novel,

44 This decision largely reflects the course of Montgomery’s early career, as aside from brief stints at Dalhousie University and with the Daily Echo in Halifax she undertook her profession from her childhood home. Though Emily’s situation lacks the same compulsion to remain as Montgomery’s, that of caring for an elderly relative and preserving the family homestead, Emily’s defiant words of justification here can just as easily be read as Montgomery’s own.
however, is populated with potential suitors for Emily, most notably Dean Priest and Teddy Kent, with whom she has an artistic connection. *Emily Climbs* closes with Emily combining an image of herself wearing “a laurel crown” with a romantic musing about Teddy’s intentions (*EC* 325).

The seeming predominance of such romance in the trilogy’s final volume, *Emily’s Quest*, disappoints some critics, but in fact it is a question of how a romantic relationship and domesticity can fit with Emily’s career and artistic temperament. The answer offered at the very end, with Emily entering into a mature artistic partnership with Teddy, may seem like “a simple love story” but really, as Epperly writes, “Montgomery’s apparently conventional fairy-tale plot is a peculiarly wry and complex commentary on the alternatives and possibilities available to women” (Epperly 147). This volume, darker in tone than any other Montgomery novel, juxtaposes Emily’s various courtships with her professional development as a writer as she ages from 17 to her thirties. Though she has finally located, cultivated and asserted her voice through the first two novels, now we see her struggle to command it: “Of course there were still many rejections…. But the percentage of new acceptances rose steadily. Every new magazine conquered meant a step upward on her Alpine path. She knew she was steadily gaining mastery over her art” (*EQ* 33). Emily’s quest for “mastery over her art” is threatened, however, by her suitors’ quests for mastery over her.

None of Emily’s suitors is more seductively dangerous than Dean Priest. The extent of the threat Dean poses to Emily’s autonomy and art is displayed in Passage 3, when his jealousy and desire to possess her completely compels him to lie in his evaluation of her just-completed novel *A Seller of Dreams*. Significantly, it is his untruth that her characters are merely “puppets,” that she did not succeed in bringing them to life, which devastates her and drives her to burn the manuscript. Appropriately, “Jarback” Priest’s lie and the subsequent burning combine to cripple Emily, figuratively and almost literally. After this incident she becomes “caught in a trap”: she

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45 Rushing blindly from her room in regret of her manuscript, Emily trips down the stairs and nearly dies.
enters into an engagement with Dean and ceases her writing (EQ 79). Before their marriage can take place, though, Emily’s second sight, her subconscious, innermost artistic spirit, saves her from being mastered by Dean by impressing upon her the depth of her bond with Teddy and the impossibility of marrying anyone else. A relationship with Teddy, it is conveyed, is distinctly preferable, since out of all the eligible men in her life, he is the only one who sees her as an equal. The two share an artistic sympathy and inspire each other. Teddy’s paintings all contain a hint of her features and personality; her portrait becomes his masterpiece. Reciprocally, it is a comment of Teddy’s in *Emily Climbs* that stimulates in Emily the idea for *A Seller of Dreams*, which, Montgomery indicates, would have been her masterpiece.

Montgomery does not bring romantic resolution, though, until the very end, first allowing Emily to regain mastery over her art. The support and inspiration provided by her family enable her to do this. When Aunt Elizabeth breaks her leg, Emily writes a little comic story to entertain her, which soon, the joy of creation having returned, grows into another novel, *The Moral of the Rose*. Cousin Jimmy clues us in to her return to artistic success: “*How does she do it? How does she do it! ... Those folks are alive!*” (EQ 147). This episode impresses upon us the essential role played by the groundedness of Emily’s place and relationships at New Moon in her sense of self and autonomy as a writer. Even here, though, Montgomery conveys a sense of ambivalence about Emily’s agency. Emily gives up on her book after several rejections; it is Cousin Jimmy who happens upon it months later and sends it in for its successful publication.

Emily finally masters her writing voice, but in the lighter comedy of *The Moral of the Rose* rather than the deeper intensity of *A Seller of Dreams* – the difference is the price she paid in Dean’s near crippling of her. Her eventual marriage with Teddy, founded on artistic equality and

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46 Here again Montgomery draws from her own experience. At age 22 in 1896, she became secretly engaged to a third cousin based on the suitability of the match rather than her love for him. She quickly regretted this decision and began to rebel against it by briefly giving in to her attractions to another, eminently unsuitable, man. Like Emily, she found herself unable to write in her journal during this period; also like Emily, she eventually broke the engagement. See SJ 1: 179-221, 2 Feb. 1897- 8 April 1898.
occurring in Emily’s thirties, after she has established her career as a writer, does not impede this voice, and thus, as Epperly suggests, represents something of a “triumph” (Epperly 148). This outcome brings into focus the divergence and progression of the Emily series from Montgomery’s earlier portrayals of the female artist in Anne and The Story Girl. First, the obstacles confronted by the maturing female artist are considered much more candidly and explicitly. Second, rather than completely subsuming her protagonist’s artistry in a conventionally female relationality, as with Anne, or completely neglecting to tackle the challenges of aging her heroine, as with Sara, with Emily, Montgomery struggles and succeeds in finding a channel, albeit one based in ties to family and community, for her female artist to lay claim to an autonomous voice as an adult.

Conclusion: A “breath of life”

As we have seen, my reinterpretation of “Anne’s chariot wheels” has led me to take something of a new direction in evaluating these three series. Focus on the kunstlerroman has shed fresh light on Anne as an authoring spirit, continuing to work with the building blocks of story even in the sequels. My emphasis on The Story Girl diverges sharply from the usual neglect of critics, bringing further to the surface Montgomery’s persistent preoccupation with childhood artistic apprenticeship in her writing. Though Emily, unlike the other two protagonists, has received some serious consideration from critics as an artist, I part from several of them in turning my attention to the vitality and autonomy of her voice above all else. Further, many would likely disagree with the degree of triumph which tinges my interpretation of the Emily series.

Since the crux of my case rests on the weight I assign to Emily, addressing this last point has implications for the whole. Among those who might dispute my analysis in particular is E. Holly Pike, who compares the careers of Emily and Jo in Louisa May Alcott’s Little Women (1868)

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47 It also represents something of an ideal for Montgomery, her own marriage being more of convenience than an artistic partnership. Montgomery too had established her writing career before her marriage in 1910. But she likened the life of a minister’s wife to “respectable slavery,” and commented that her husband Ewan MacDonald had something of a “mediaeval mind” towards women, though he “never sought to interfere” with her writing — indeed, he could not, since her income largely supported the family (SJ 1: 321, 12 Oct. 1906, SJ 3: 47-48, 25 March 1922).
to each other and to their respective creators specifically, as well as to other “novels with artist heroines” by more “important” writers more generally.48 A brief consideration of these comparisons will allow me to situate my conclusions in a larger context. Pike tends to find both Emily and Jo wanting, emphasizing how they differ from the authors in their degrees of independence. Both Montgomery and Alcott, Pike implies, caved to social and market pressures in “depict[ing] the woman artist as rooted in domesticity” (Pike 50). I take issue with Pike on two points. First is the negative light in which she casts Montgomery and Alcott even while admitting that their undertaking as writers of popular fiction for girls does diverge from that of the author of the more adult-directed kunstlerroman. That in their writing Jo and Emily are grounded in family and community connections need not only be read as a disappointment of individual autonomy. It can also be read, as I have sought to indicate, as a celebration of the fact that the two protagonists were ultimately able to find a channel through which to voice their identities as writers, despite all the conventions and strictures – conventions all the more implicitly accentuated in such popular fiction – which worked to silence them.

Second, though Pike draws many useful parallels between Jo and Emily, she conflates them to a degree which is a bit unsettling. Though Montgomery admitted she felt like a Victorian fish out of water amidst the new modern literature of the 1910s and 1920s, she did indeed write fifty years later than Alcott. Important differences exist between Little Women and Emily which can be just as revealing as the similarities. The characterization of Emily’s identity as a writer runs much deeper than Jo’s, and while the Emily trilogy can be seen as a writer’s series, with Emily’s drive to climb the “Alpine path” formulating the backbone of the larger plot, the sequence of Little Women, Little Men and Jo’s Boys certainly cannot. The most significant difference, though, lies in the

matter of voice. Constantly employing the device of Emily's letters to her father and her diary entries, as well as including snippets of her poetry and stories, Montgomery conveys to us the vibrancy, power, and insight of Emily's writing voice in a way that Alcott never quite approaches with Jo. We are allowed to read and judge Emily as a writer directly. This stress on voice is no anomaly for Montgomery. Rather, as we have seen, it is anticipated both in Anne, with the combination of the young Anne's pages of chatter and our identification with the older, listening Anne, and in The Story Girl, with the juxtaposition of the older Beverly's nostalgic voice and the weight he places on Sara's youthful tales.

In considering the writing career of Montgomery and the literary value of her popular girls' series, we must be careful not to automatically jump on the usual "Anne's chariot wheels" bandwagon. Doing so causes us to miss the contribution Montgomery made to her genre in increasingly bringing the artistry of her protagonists' voices to the fore. The enlivening of "dry bones" by Montgomery's heroines, along with the turn to a more serious examination of the maturation of the female artist in Emily, can be read, perhaps, as Montgomery's own "breath of life" into the female kunstlerroman.
Works Consulted

*Works cited within the text are denoted with asterisks

Primary works

Novels and stories


Other


Secondary Works


