

## THE IMAGES OF FEMALE WRITERS IN THE “EMILY” AND “ANNE” SERIES BY L.M. MONTGOMERY

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### Summary

While the *Künstlerroman* may well be considered one of the genres that have blossomed most prominently in the 20<sup>th</sup> century English-Canadian literature, research investigating its poetics has remained on the fringes of literary scholarship. This paper examines L.M. Montgomery’s sophisticated use of the *Künstlerinroman* through her portraits of female writers in the *Emily* and *Anne* series. My goal is to explore how Montgomery’s heroines choose to narrate themselves and the world around them, how they transcend difficulties and assert their own unique perspectives. Therefore, this paper examines not only the socio-cultural environment which served as background for the creation of literature, but also the writer’s reflections regarding the process of bringing said literature into the world. Drawing on the scholarship of J. Buckley, R. Seret, E. Varsamopoulou, F. Hammill, K. Macfarlane, G.A. Guth and others, this paper aims to analyze L.M. Montgomery’s “sophisticated handling of genre” (E.R. Epperly) in greater depth and place her portraits of the female artists within a broader cultural and literary context. The question of female subjectivity, which concerns women’s perceptions of their own writing (and their fate as artists), is central to my research.

**Key words:** Canadian literature, artist novel, *Künstlerroman*, image, motif, symbol, feminine discourse, artistic discourse.

DOI <https://doi.org/10.23856/6011>

### 1. Introduction

While the *Künstlerroman*, German for an artist novel, may well be considered one of the genres that have blossomed most prominently in twentieth-century English-Canadian literature, research investigating its poetics has remained on the fringes of literary scholarship. Examples of the genre include *By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept* (1945) by Elizabeth Smart, *A Mixture of Frailties* (1958) by Robertson Davies, *The Hidden Mountain* (1962) by Gabrielle Roy, *Swann: A Mystery* (1987) by Carol Shields and others. While attention has been drawn to fictional portraits of the Canadian artist in autobiographical writing (Hammill, 2003), modernist (Williams, 1991) and postmodernist novels (Hutcheon, 1988; Macfarlane, 1998), with some critics also exploring the potential of the *Künstlerroman* as a subgenre of Canadian Prairie novel (Ovcharenko, 1996) and its link to the tradition of the Canadian *Bildungsroman* (Keith, 2006), L.M. Montgomery’s contribution to the development of the genre has not been investigated in sufficient depth.

In literary criticism, *Künstlerroman* is usually defined as a novel “that deals with the youth and development of an individual who becomes—or is on the threshold of becoming—a painter, musician, or poet” (*The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1998). By definition, then, the central figure of the genre tends to be a young person whose physical, spiritual, mental and creative growth is placed at the conceptual and compositional centre of the novel.

This aspect of the *Künstlerroman* is highlighted, among others, by Jerome Buckley (1974) and Roberta Seret (1992), who viewed it as a subgenre of the *Bildungsroman*, which is German for the development novel or coming-of-age novel.

Only recently have researchers started paying particular attention to novels in which the creative protagonist is a woman and investigating female experience as a special factor that plays a role in the creation and perception of art. Evy Varsamopoulou, for instance, has centred her research around investigating the particular qualities of *Künstlerinromane* which differentiate them from *Künstlerromane*, using the German suffix “in” to further delineate the female and male versions of the genre. (In German, the *-in* suffix is typically used with regard to job titles and occupations to create feminine-specific terms, for example, e.g. *Schauspieler/Schauspielerin* (actor/actress), *Author/Authorin* (author/authoress), *Kellner/Kellnerin* (waiter/waitress).) She states: “*Künstlerinromane* ... create a fiction, usually of the development of an artist (a writer in our case), which also leads them to make (subjective) statements about the creation of all literature. What does it mean (for something) to become writing, (for someone, a woman) to become a writer?” (Varsamopoulou, 2019: xxiv). With regard to Canadian literature specifically, Robert Kroetsch writes, “The figure of the artist is obsessively present in Canadian writing; the *künstlerroman* is, often, its sub-genre. In the beginning is the artist, beginning. With the difference that in Canadian writing the artist-figure is often a woman” (Kroetsch, 1989: 66).

The question of female subjectivity, which concerns women’s perceptions of their own writing and their fate as artists, is thus central to my research. By applying what Karen Macfarlane refers to as “the self-consciously constructing voice of a woman narrator” (Macfarlane, 1998: 7) in mid- to late-twentieth-century novels to L.M. Montgomery’s *Anne* and *Emily* series, I will examine the representations of the female artist and her experiences as portrayed in Montgomery’s novels, highlighting this often introspective facet of her work.

## 2. Main text

Although Montgomery herself noted that she could not “see any resemblance between [Emily and Anne], save one or two superficial ones in the stage they walk on” (Montgomery & Weber, 2006: 115), various researchers have pointed out similarities between the two heroines in their capacities as readers and writers (Frever, 2021) as well as their reciprocal and empathetic relationship with nature (Epperly, 2018). From my observations, both Emily and Anne are initially presented as creative young girls with an acute sensitivity to beauty, nature, and art. Like Susanna Moodie’s Rachel Wilde, they are “[u]nacquainted with the philosophy of human institutions” (Moodie, 1991: 135–136) and unaware of social decorum rules, and so not yet concerned with other people’s opinions. They therefore demonstrate an extraordinary clarity of vision and willingness to absorb new experiences. By first portraying her heroines as children, Montgomery makes good use of the child’s perspective to portray the girls’ fascination with the world around them and delineate the difference between the freshness and clarity of a child’s vision, on one hand, and the rigidity and conservativeness of adults’ worldview, on the other hand.

Despite the pervasive belief that an aspiring author would have to live in an urban centre to gather material for her stories, both Emily’s and Anne’s points of view lie on the periphery, in the Canadian countryside. To the city-dweller’s eye, it may seem that “nothing ever happens” (Montgomery, 1979: 27) on rural Prince Edward Island. But to the meticulous eye of an observant author, events and relationships unfolding in a small village prove to be just as interesting,

humorous and insightful as those that could have taken place in a large city. In responding to an outsider's derisive comment about Blair Water, Emily proclaims:

“Look at all the things that have happened in Blair Water in just the last three weeks—comedy and tragedy all mixed up together. James Baxter has suddenly stopped speaking to his wife and *nobody knows why*. She doesn't, poor soul, and she is breaking her heart about it. Old Adam Gillian, who hated pretence of any sort, died two weeks ago and his last words were, ‘See that there isn't any howling and sniffing at my funeral.’ So nobody howled or sniffled. Nobody wanted to, and since he had forbidden it nobody pretended to. There never was such a cheerful funeral in Blair Water. I've seen weddings that were more melancholy—Ella Brice's, for instance. What cast a cloud over hers was that she forgot to put on her white slippers when she dressed, and went down to the parlour in a pair of old, faded, bedroom shoes with holes in the toes. Really, people couldn't have talked more about it if she had gone down without *anything* on. Poor Ella cried all through the wedding-supper about it” (*Montgomery, 1979: 26*).

Emily's dedication to staying in her native place proves to be conducive to her development as a writer and gives her stories a distinct “Canadian tang and flavour” (*Montgomery, 1979: 273*), which reflects the heroine's extensive knowledge of the world around her and her understanding of the complicated social networks in the type of rural community she chooses to describe. By combining the universal themes (“births, deaths, marriages, scandals” (*Montgomery, 2014: 2*)) with the local “flavour,” Emily is able to create a truly unique product which can appeal to a broad audience without being trite; and it is not by chance that Janet Royal characterizes Emily's novel as a “wild rose” and remarks that its creation would not have been possible had Emily chosen to reside in New York. *The Moral of the Rose*, per Royal, is “all sweetness and unexpectedness with sly little thorns of wit and satire. It has power, delicacy, understanding. It's not just story-telling. There's some magicry in it” (*Montgomery, 2014: 210*). This observation underscores the correctness of the heroine's decision to remain in her hometown, as it allowed her to preserve her essence and avoid being diluted or lost amidst the bustling environment of a metropolitan city. Thus, Emily takes something that would have ordinarily been considered a restraint and turns it into an advantage—a circumstance of life that allows the female writer to assert her identity and her unique perspective with confidence.

The protagonist's ability to surmount constraints, transcend prejudices, and navigate criticisms, ultimately leveraging these challenges to her advantage, is one of the prevailing themes explored in the *Emily* series. By detailing the ordeals that her heroine must undergo, Montgomery shows how preconceived gender biases influence the societal perception of women and their occupations, and centres the female perspective as the most important one in highlighting the heroine's creative and personal development, as opposed to the perspectives of society, friends, family, and so on. Although family and friends are often portrayed as well-meaning in Montgomery's novels, they are not always particularly understanding of the artist's personal choices and her creative work. More often than not, the general public criticizes the heroine for prioritizing art and education over marriage, undermines her achievements, and generally pushes her to follow the stereotypically defined feminine life scenario, which consisted in finding a sensible husband, marrying at a young age, and foregoing her “silly” hobbies and interests in favour of homemaking and raising children. And even if the artist does find some “kindred spirits” along the way, true understanding is not guaranteed, so climbing her Alpine Path is presented as a largely solitary endeavour.

In her journey to establish herself as a writer, Emily faces the challenge of confronting a double standard, most notably articulated by Aunt Elizabeth. In her childhood, as the heroine was just beginning to write stories, Elizabeth Murray chastised Emily for “writing trash”

(Montgomery, 1983: 157) which she perceived as a waste of time, and even went so far as to assert that it was “wicked to write novels” (Montgomery, 1983: 305). However, as Emily begins to achieve a certain measure of success, with her poems and stories finding acceptance for publication and earning her payment for her work, Aunt Elizabeth reluctantly concedes, stating, “I don’t mind your writing—now. You seem to be able to earn a living by it in a very ladylike way” (Montgomery, 2014: 58); And once Emily gains recognition in her community as a writer, the standard by which she is judged undergoes a reversal once again, and she finds herself again being undermined and underappreciated. For instance, Aunt Ruth informs Mrs. Drury, “Emily has made fifty dollars by her pen since New Year’s. ... I begin to think the child has an easy way of making a living” (Montgomery, 1979: 254), implying a lack of respect for the genuine talent and effort invested in Emily’s writing pursuits.

In the end, it is precisely the monetary compensation that tips the scales of the clan’s judgment in Emily’s favour and prompts the critical family members to begrudgingly accept her affinity for writing, which has proven to be financially rewarding and thus useful in the aunts’ and uncles’ eyes. It is noteworthy that although young Anne and Emily share a certain idealism in their refusal to pursue work solely for commercial gain, advocating for art driven by the pursuit of “the very highest ideals” (Montgomery, 1980: 116) and unmarred by financial considerations. Anne’s unfortunate experience with the Rollings Reliable competition is portrayed as a significant setback in this regard: she refers to the check she got for “that horrible Reliable Baking Powder story” as “tainted money” (Montgomery, 1980: 211), and mourns the fact that her creation had been “degraded to the level of a baking powder advertisement” (Montgomery, 1980: 116). Although Anne herself was not at fault here, as the story was submitted to the Rollings Reliable competition by Diana, her reaction to Diana’s initiative is quite telling of her philosophy on the matter. In contrast, Emily gradually learns that writing stories for monetary compensation does not necessarily diminish the value of her craft, and she is able to establish a relatively successful livelihood by writing for newspapers. Interestingly, it is Aunt Elizabeth who points out that art is meaningless without a consumer to perceive and comprehend it, scolding Emily for writing “yards of trash that nobody wants” (Montgomery, 1979: 26). In this exchange over an obituary poem for the old Peter DeGeer, which Emily refused to write because she considered it “a desecration of [her] art” (Montgomery, 1979: 25), we can observe two polar perspectives on the meaning of art: the first one, voiced by Aunt Elizabeth, posits that art should always serve a moral or functional purpose, while the second one, which belongs to Emily, asserts that art should be free from utilitarian function and that its aesthetic aspect should be at the forefront. The latter point of view can be briefly defined by the formula of *l’art pour l’art* (French for “art for art’s sake”), which was originally coined by Théophile Gautier and became a bohemian creed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As the plot develops, however, we see Emily becoming a lot less rigid in her beliefs and adapting her craft to help her deal with the circumstances she finds herself in. Through what she terms her “pot-boilers” (Montgomery, 2014: 55), the heroine not only manages to repay her debt to Uncle Wallace and Aunt Ruth for their financial support towards her education but also accumulates personal funds to use at her discretion. For Montgomery herself, the fact “that one could write for *money* was a stunning revelation” (Gammel, 2008: 24) in her early years; and in the *Emily* series, we can observe a heroine who gradually learns to balance the pragmatic and the artistic aspects of her work.

In portraying the development of the female artist, Montgomery shows her imbibing, regurgitating, and then gradually moving past the hackneyed literary tropes of the era. For example, Anne’s preferred plots and characters are typically based on romantic and sentimentalist tropes, with recurring motifs (love rivalry, the rescuing of a beautiful maiden, romantic

proposals, and so on) and exaggeratedly pompous character names like Averil Lester, Cordelia Montmorency, and Geraldine Seymour. These artistic choices are often influenced by her reading (Alfred Tennyson, Walter Scott, George Gordon Byron and others), as they are for Emily in the beginning of her journey. Often, Mr. Carpenter is able to directly infer from her work that she had been trying to emulate another writer (“This one sounds like a weak imitation of Kipling. Been reading him lately?” (*Montgomery, 1979: 86*)). Learning to imitate first, Montgomery’s heroines then gradually come to discover what Gwendolyn Ann Guth, writing on the *Emily* series, describes as their “own artistic essence, which is an amalgam and yet distinct” (*Guth, 1991: 43*), and start improving their true strengths which differentiate them from anybody else who can write. As time passes, Emily learns to “paint the weakness and foolishness and wickedness of a character in a way that is positively uncanny” (*Montgomery, 1979: 26*), which earns her far higher praise from her teacher and mentor Mr. Carpenter than any of her poetic attempts. Experimenting with descriptions of everyday scenes and character studies, the heroine soon finds that she can, in Wordsworth’s terms, “make the incidents of common life interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature” (*Wordsworth, 2000: 596–597*). Her best and most successful works are novels from the viewpoint of self-evaluation as well as public opinion. For instance, when Emily reads the manuscript of *The Moral of the Rose* to her family, Cousin Jimmy thinks of it as “the most wonderful story ever written,” and Aunt Laura confesses she cannot sleep “for wondering what is going to happen to the *Applegaths* in the next chapter.” So full of life are Emily’s characters that her relatives become convinced she had based them off real people—to the extent that Aunt Elizabeth even has to warn her “not to put any of the neighbours in” (*Montgomery, 2014: 171–172*). Having combined her sensitivity to beauty, acute observation skills, and the desire to heal rather than hurt (*Montgomery, 1979: 27*), Emily is able to create something truly outstanding and assert her identity as a professional writer.

By outlining Emily’s gradual psychological, physical, and professional growth, Montgomery has essentially offered her reader a glimpse into the complex inner life of a writer with all the joys and pitfalls it may entail. Through perseverance and hard work, Emily demonstrates how the young writer’s technique can improve over time: from her first tentative attempts at “deskriphshuns” and “meditashuns,” from “An Address to a Buttercup” and “Lines to my Favourite Cat,” to writing more sophisticated essays, poems, and stories that can potentially be published. If the younger Emily overindulges in using italics and putting a dot under every word she finds beautiful, the older Emily has learnt the craft of editing, proofreading, and refining her work. She goes from writing “sad trash” (*Montgomery, 1983: 301*), as Montgomery would put it, to achieving tangible commercial success and getting progressively better at her craft.

In *Emily’s Quest*, the emerging writer is compared to a Ukrainian artist whose diary became a literary sensation in the 1890s: “[She knew there would be] days when the editorial phrase, ‘not necessarily a reflection on its merits,’ would get on her nerves to such an extent that she would feel like imitating Marie Bashkirtseff and hurling the taunting, ticking, remorseless sitting-room clock out of the window” (*Montgomery, 2014: 3*). Originally born in a small village in the Poltava region, Bashkirtseff spent the majority of her life in France and turned herself into a highly skilled artist by writing ten hours a day for six years (*Bashkirtseff, 1890: 653*). Her diary remains a striking testament to a woman’s extraordinary determination, discipline, passion for her art, and self-control. “I swear solemnly,” she writes, “by the Gospels, by the passion of Christ, by myself—that in four years I will be famous” (*Bashkirtseff, 1890: 310*). Emily’s famous vow to climb the Alpine Path echoes Bashkirtseff’s ambitious self-declaration to prove herself to the world and put in as much effort as possible to earn her place among the stars:

“I, Emily Byrd Starr, do solemnly vow this day that I will climb the Alpine Path and write my name on the scroll of fame” (*Montgomery, 1983: 290*). Through this comparison, Montgomery once again emphasizes the importance of hard work and determination in achieving one’s goals and drives home the idea that these qualities can help female creators be successful even in a world that generally does not want them to succeed.

As Bashkirtseff’s journal had been translated into multiple different languages, the ideas expressed in it became a popular point of contention for conservatively minded critics who failed to recognize the potential held by an ambitious woman and the work she had put in to achieve her goals. British journalist and editor William Stead, in *The Review of Reviews* (1890), wrote about Marie: “Her intellect developed in advance of her heart. ... She was artist, musician, wit, philosopher, student, anything you like but a natural woman with a heart to love, and a soul to find it supreme satisfaction in sacrifice for love or for child” (*Stead, 1890: 544–545*). In this vivid account, we can see that Marie had clearly failed (in Stead’s opinion) to comply with the patriarchal stereotype of a “full and perfect woman” (*Stead, 1890: 545*), having prioritised herself and her art over marriage,–but there was also a different point of view. G.B. Shaw, in his attack on ideals and idealists in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* (1891), dedicated a whole chapter to the discussion of the ridiculousness of the “womanly woman” stereotype and used Stead’s comments on Bashkirtseff as a prominent example of how patriarchal discourse can have detrimental effects on women’s lives, constraining them in their desires and ambitions and reinforcing the idea that a woman’s true self-realization may only be found in child-rearing, homemaking and serving her husband. Per Shaw, “of all the idealist abominations that make society pestiferous, I doubt if there be any so mean as that of forcing self-sacrifice on a woman under pretence that she likes it; and, if she ventures to contradict the pretence, declaring her no true woman” (*Shaw, 1891: 32*).

Emily Starr, throughout her journey as an emerging writer, has to battle many comments similar to Stead’s. Dean Priest tells her that she “can do more with those eyes–that smile” (*Montgomery, 2014: 37*) than she can ever do with her pen, and proceeds to call her novel “cobwebs”–as “pretty and flimsy and ephemeral as a rose-tinted cloud” (*Montgomery, 2014: 61*), in an attempt to further devalue Emily’s work, push the heroine towards voluntarily surrendering her career, and manipulate her into becoming a subservient wife and mother.

Depicting a creative individual struggling to find their way in a hostile or indifferent society remains one of Montgomery’s recurring tropes–however, it was not her invention. This conflict was explored in great depth by writers of the Romanticism era (by William Wordsworth, George Gordon Byron, and Heinrich Heine, among others). The dichotomy between enthusiasts (creative individuals whose life is rich with ideas, thoughts, and emotions) and Philistines (individuals who live mundane lives, ignorant of and indifferent to art and culture) was most prominently outlined in a satiric fairytale fantasy novel *Klein Zaches genannt Zinnober* [*Little Zaches Called Cinnabar*] (1819) by German Romantic writer E.T.A. Hoffmann. This distinctly Hoffmannian view of an artist as someone who has been blessed in extraordinary ways and differs starkly from the general population can be found both in the *Anne* and the *Emily* series, although it gains a greater thematic importance in the latter. Emily, who represents the type of an enthusiastic heroine, embraces the role of an active creative force, fiercely advocating for the preservation of her essence, her art, and her right to occupy a significant place in the world.

In a letter to Ephraim Weber (19 October 1921), Montgomery wrote: “‘Emily’ will be, in a sense, more autobiographical than any of my other books. People were never right in saying I was ‘Anne’ but, in some respects, they will be right if they write me down as *Emily*”

(*Montgomery & Weber, 2006: 88*). On another occasion, she wrote in her diary: “It is the best book I have ever written—and I have had more intense pleasure in writing it than any of the others—not even excepting *Green Gables*. I have *lived* it, and I hated to pen the last line and write *finis*” (*Montgomery & Rubio, 1985: 39*). Montgomery’s favourite heroine is thus “one of “the eternal slaves of beauty,” of whom Bliss Carman sings, who are yet “masters of the world” (*Montgomery, 1979: 137*). Or, in Susanna Moodie’s terms, “the child who reveled in grand conceptions alone with nature, and the solitude of her own soul, ... the strangest, most eccentric impersonification of a feminine humanity, that could well be imagined” (*Moodie, 1991: 140*). The role that nature plays in the formation of a female artist, as portrayed by Montgomery, cannot be understated. It is precisely in nature that her heroines can find solace, comfort, and inspiration.

The intimate relationship with nature is a shared characteristic of both heroines, as highlighted by Elizabeth Epperly who describes it as “communion with nature—a reciprocal, animated interaction that renews the spirit or awakens it” (*Epperly, 2018: 89*). This interaction entails a profound interconnectedness, wherein every minute element of the natural realm reacts to and is influenced by all other elements, regardless how large or how small. Drawing on Epperly’s insights, I would like to emphasize the seamless continuation of the heroines’ experiences with the natural world into their artistic and creative endeavors, which compel them to seize a pen and commence writing before inspiration dissipates. When Anne finds herself trapped in the Copp girls’ duck-house (unfazed by her unfortunate predicament), her ardent wish for a pen and paper is driven by her yearning to capture “a most interesting dialogue between the asters and the sweet peas and the wild canaries in the lilac bush and the guardian spirit of the garden” (*Montgomery, 2009: 208*). Similarly, Emily, while wandering with Ilse in search of a lost young boy, remains undeterred by the rain that drenches her. She pauses to hastily transcribe the details of a house surrounded by grey clouds, atop a hill of clover meadows, basking in the sun’s rays. Her declaration that she would have “missed some of the flavour” (*Montgomery, 1979: 167*) had she waited for dry land before jotting down her description demonstrates her unwavering dedication to capturing the essence of her surroundings. Hence, nature in Montgomery’s novels responds to the heroine-observer who possesses keen perception and appreciation, mirroring back to her the beauty she chooses to see in the world.

Moreover, Montgomery’s heroines utilize this beauty as a catalyst for inspiration, drawing upon it as material for their future literary works. Anne and Emily’s dialogical and reciprocal relationship with nature leads to them internalizing nature as an integral component of their being. This ongoing dialogue commences in their childhood and endures into adulthood. Upon arriving at Matthew and Marilla’s house, eleven-year-old Anne Shirley expresses a longing to immerse herself in the natural world, stating, “I want to go out so much—everything seems to be calling to me, ‘Anne, Anne, come out to us. Anne, Anne, we want a playmate’” (*Montgomery, 2008: 48*). Similarly, as an adult, Anne talks to her friends of “poems” that she sees in nature, thus explicitly stating that nature is to be perceived as an immediate extension of art and literature. Responding to Jane’s prosaic observation that “a poem is lines and verses,” Anne emphasizes the primacy of the object’s “soul” over its physical form, stating that “that beautiful bit is the soul of an unwritten poem” (*Montgomery, 2009: 146*). This idea suggests that Anne perceives the environment around her in terms of potential rather than its present manifestation, placing emphasis on the transformative capacity of the environment (or its constituent elements) as opposed to its current state. Viewing her own life and the world around her as stories waiting to be told, the heroine embraces the role of both observer and participant, weaving together the threads of her own narrative and the stories of those around her.

Emily Starr's profound connection with nature reaches a significant culmination when she is granted the opportunity to choose "two dollars' worth of seeds or plants" from the *Garden and Woodland* catalogue as a reward for her poem, *Owl's Laughter*, which was "accepted by and printed in a *real* magazine" (Montgomery, 1979: 121). This moment represents a full-circle manifestation of her communion with the natural world. Throughout her experiences, Emily has often sought solace and respite amidst nature's embrace, utilizing it as a refuge from the vexations and grievances of life. Now, she can express her gratitude by sowing these seeds into the soil and nurturing their growth. In this act, a reciprocal exchange of energy is initiated: that which Emily once received from nature as a gift of inspiration is now reciprocated as she contributes to the flourishing of the natural realm.

"And *paid* for! To be sure a cheque would have been more acceptable—two dollars all her own, earned by her own pen, would have seemed like riches to Emily. But what fun she and Cousin Jimmy would have selecting the seeds! She could see in imagination that beautiful flower-bed next summer in the New Moon garden—a glory of crimson and purple and blue and gold" (Montgomery, 1979: 121).

Both heroines, Anne and Emily, possess an understanding that the impulse to write and the substance of their writings are only partially under their conscious control. While the selection of words and the dedicated cultivation of writing style and proficiency hold significant thematic importance in the *Emily* series, Emily herself famously asserts that her compulsion to write is inherent within her being and cannot therefore be resisted ("Oh, I must write, Aunt Elizabeth. ... You see, it's this way. It is *in* me. I can't help it" (Montgomery, 1983: 301)). She contends that beautiful lines sometimes manifest in her work not through deliberate willpower, but rather "as if *Something Else* were trying to speak through [her] – and it was that *Something Else* that made the line seem wonderful" (Montgomery, 1979: 16). Alicia Pollard positions Emily's enigmatic "Something" close to the Power depicted in Percy Shelley's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" (1816) – a mysterious force capable of bestowing blessings upon human thoughts and souls, endowing them with an elevated sensitivity to beauty and designating them as loyal servants of this Power on Earth. Pollard argues that Shelley's work, along with the *Emily* books, replaces the concept of a comprehensible Christian God with an impersonal Power that dwells within the realm of darkness, evoking both fascination and fear (Pollard, 2021). Through the introduction of mystical elements in the *Emily* series, Montgomery posits that the inner workings of imagination and inspiration elude rational explanations; to understand them, it is necessary to connect to the spiritual realm, to what she terms the "kingdom of ideal beauty" (Rubio & Waterston, 2018: 119) and the "wonderful world behind the veil." This realm, according to Montgomery, can only be perceived "with other eyes than those of sense" (Montgomery, 1983: 29), implying a need for a heightened perception beyond the confines of ordinary sensory experience.

The idea of the writer having only partial control over what or how she writes is also reflected in *Anne of the Island* (1915). Working on her story "Averil's Atonement," Anne complains: "Averil is such an unmanageable heroine. She will do and say things I never meant her to. Then that spoils everything that went before and I have to write it all over again" (Montgomery, 1980: 89). While Anne does not experience mysterious visions that reveal to her hidden truths about the world, as Emily does, she is nonetheless cognizant of the presence of other forces at play in the creative process, beyond the writer's original intent. In Anne's case, the idea of relinquishing control takes on a slightly different form, whereby the internal logic of the text (its characters, plotlines, images, motifs) becomes the driving force that guides Anne's pen in particular directions.

### 3. Conclusion

By embracing both the familiar and the mysterious, the tangible world and the realm of imagination, Montgomery's heroines forge their own distinct reality. Focusing on the female voice as the dominant narrative mode, Montgomery puts creative women and their perspectives on the world at the conceptual centre of her novels. The problems of perception, interpretation, publishing, and further transformation of literary texts once they have been released to the public are themes frequently touched upon in Montgomery's work, whether implicitly through characters, situations, intertextual references, or explicitly through direct commentary on issues that have concerned her at some point in her writing). Thus, the metafictional discourse is potent in many of Montgomery's novels. By talking about how literature is created, how much work it takes, and the difficulties arising after the manuscript itself is finished, Montgomery legitimized the standing of female artists in the world, giving them a strong voice to relate to and showing that these concerns are valid and worthy of serious discussions.

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