

Editorial: Mythologizing Montgomery

It is one of the fascinating ironies of popular culture that characters who are socially peripheral — such as Frankenstein and Tarzan — can become so symbolically central. Such is the case with Anne of Green Gables, the red-haired orphan who seems forever unwanted in her fictional childhood, and yet forever desired in contemporary Canadian culture. She has become a part of the shared imaginary repertoire of the dominant culture in this nation in a way that no other Canadian fictional character has. When I started soliciting papers for this issue over two years ago, I was asking questions only about the mythologizing of Montgomery's characters and the way that mythologizing informs narratives about nationhood. What I hadn't expected was the brilliant variety of papers I received on the consumability of Montgomery icons, from their persistence in Avonlea kitsch (Lynes), through their presence on the net and "virtual island" chat groups (Nolan *et al.*), their re-imagining in the Salter Street/CANAR TV series of *Emily of New Moon* (Gittings), and in the Kevin Sullivan Avonlea series (Frever), through to their appearance in Japanese popular culture (Stoffman; Ghan). Each of these contributors asks us to look anew at the value systems that encourage the mythologizing of Anne or Emily or Canada: Jeanette Lynes asks, among many things, whether or not it is a nostalgia for a residual culture (an older, supposedly simpler one) that compels people to buy "authentic" Anne dolls and key chains. And in asking whether or not the televisual additions to and deletions from Montgomery's work make her fictions more palatable to late twentieth-century audiences, Gittings and Frever come up with distinct answers. Frever sees the intertexts (*The Sound of Music*, *Little Women*, *My Brilliant Career*) that Sullivan uses as source materials that enrich our appreciation of Montgomery's literary tradition and her historical context. Gittings argues that while the television version of *Emily of New Moon* is not authentic to Montgomery's version, its historical authenticity — its inclusion of Micmacs, the French, and fallen women — help it furnish a narrative about nationhood that seems more consumable today than Montgomery's original. Nolan *et al.* analyze the kind of discursive community that Montgomery fans nurture on the net and ask what sorts of narratives and sensibilities are created and sustained under the aegis of Montgomery. And, finally, to the question of why Anne is so popular in Japan, we have two answers: Stoffman argues that Anne's particular brand of individualism involves filial piety and an adorable fiestiness that never shades into crass rebellion — and that's what makes her so consumable an icon. Ghan, in a captivating pastiche of anecdotes from her personal and professional "encounters" with Anne, offers the notion that Anne embodies the Japanese value of "gambatte."

And so I offer here a variety of ways in which we can come to understand the appeal of that freckled girl waiting patiently at the train station, a girl who neither exemplifies the terrifying consequences of playing God (Frankenstein) nor the breathtaking fantasy of self-sufficiency in the wild (Tarzan), but whose image still seems to catch at our imaginations — even if that image is flattened on a tacky key fob.

Marie Davis

It is worth noting that in this special issue on L. M. Montgomery and popular culture, there are three French articles, and that all explore a common field of research: Quebec children's literature and its integration into the larger literary institution. Jean-François Boutin analyzes the ambiguities of the concept of children's literature and points out that the recent acknowledgement of the literary dimension of children's books has secured their acceptance in university curriculum and literary circles. Suzanne Pouliot and Noëlle Sorin examine the radical changes that occurred in the institutional "discourse," namely, the Quebec school system, between 1960 and 1980, changes that ultimately concur with the rise and fall of publishers specializing in children's literature. Finally, Édith Madore studies the shifts in policies of federal and provincial programs that support Québécois publishers. All in all, these contributions will make readers aware that social and political institutions play a vital role in the emergence and vitality of children's literature in Quebec.

Daniel Chouinard