

# The moral of the rose: L. M. Montgomery's Emily

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**Résumé:** Dans la série des Emily, L.M. Montgomery recourt à des symboles et à des procédés narratifs pour montrer quelles sont les forces qui s'exercent à la fois en faveur et contre les ambitions artistiques d'une femme écrivain.

Although L.M. Montgomery embeds a countertext of rebellion within all of her novels, she does so most forcefully in the *Emily Series*:<sup>1</sup> in this trilogy she carefully subverts the formulaic romance genre that requires the heroine to marry and realize her ambition vicariously through her husband's achievement.<sup>2</sup> To satisfy her traditional audience, Montgomery provides a surface-level plot in which the female protagonist finally succeeds in marrying the "boy next door," but she undermines the closure-by-marriage requirement of the genre through a complex set of symbols and markers which are skilfully woven into the text. As the protagonist, Emily Byrd Starr climbs the "Alpine Path" to establish herself as a professional writer, supportive forces align themselves to act as guides and guardians in upcoming battles. Counter to these, devious and hostile predator-forces close in on her. The resulting conflict forms the basis for most of the tension and energy in the *Emily Series*. Emily's story epitomizes the struggle of a female artist in Montgomery's time and place.

Montgomery felt an extraordinary bond with the character she had created in the *Emily Series*. On Feb. 15, 1922, she wrote in her journal: "Today I finished 'Emily of New Moon,' after six months writing. It is the best book I have ever written – and I have had more intense pleasure in writing it than any of the others – not even excepting *Green Gables*." Further, on July 20, 1922, upon sending her manuscript away, Montgomery wrote in her journal of "Dear little *Emily* whom I love far better than I ever loved *Anne*. I felt as if I were sending part of myself."<sup>3</sup>

*Emily of New Moon*, the first in the trilogy, focuses on Emily as a young artist figure. Like a new moon, a darkened moon, Emily lives with her despotic, unsympathetic Aunt Elizabeth. When she begins to express an interest in writing, she is denied paper – she has no room of her own. However, as a new moon is destined to grow into fullness, Emily, aided by her Cousin Jimmy, who secretly spirits notebooks to her, continues writing – ironically using Aunt Elizabeth as a rich vein for material.

Perhaps because the trilogy is autobiographical,<sup>4</sup> Montgomery assigns Emily's sexuality and exuberance, the unchecked spirit poured into a Presby-

terian mould, to the companion character Ilse. By separating assertiveness and anger from Emily, and presenting these in the androgenous Ilse, Montgomery is able to explore expressions and actions that would otherwise be unacceptable to her readership.

It is significant that Emily first meets Ilse when she attempts to flee New Moon gender restrictions. As punishment for doffing her high laced boots, a female fetter, Emily is locked in an upstairs room (*cf. Jane Eyre*) lined with the portraits of her stern, patriarchal ancestors. She escapes via Cousin Jimmy's ladder, and once liberated, meets Ilse who is sitting on a fence – a position which defies enclosure – on the border of gender, perhaps.

Prior to befriending Ilse, Emily had been hurt by false friends who required that she blindly conform to societal gender expectations. When Emily is taunted by the school children – given a box holding a snake – she retaliates by denouncing sewing, cooking, and other gender-biased activities, in favour of writing poetry. Ilse's coming is timely and she rescues Emily from the snake, and leads her away from the closed female system of restrictive social convention, in which young women focus their attention on roles preparatory to attracting the men they will need to support them.

Emily finds that Ilse, because of the emotional detachment of her father, has a great deal more gender freedom than she herself enjoys. Ilse is emancipated from the expected household regime of a girl of her age. When Ilse and Emily enact domestic scenes in their play, Ilse takes the role of the husband. During one of these scenes, they fight over the need for a parlour in their playhouse. The scene replicates the battlefield of marriage: while Emily sits demurely cross legged, coolly interjecting "sarcastic retorts," Ilse rages, hurling abusive volleys. As her passion becomes physical and Ilse destroys the china cabinet, Ilse clearly appears to be striking out against her role as an upcoming proper Victorian woman. Through Ilse's outburst, Montgomery is expressing repressed female anger. But because she must adhere to the structure of the romance genre, Montgomery affixes "blame" for Ilse's behaviour onto another woman – her mysteriously absent mother. Clearly, Ilse's androgyny, even at this point in her young life, should point the way for Emily to rebel against societal gender constructs, because, as Ilse is beginning to demonstrate, Emily's writing career is implicated.

Codified communication becomes an important feature of their friendship. For instance, at the potato harvest, they devise their own language to override the boys who alienate them by speaking French. Using the camouflage of humour Montgomery alerts the reader to the fact that embedded within these novels are encoded messages which counteract male exclusiveness. Significantly, Montgomery declines to follow through on this potentially humorous scene. Instead, she has Ilse contract influenza at harvest time, leaving Emily alone in a male world equipped with a female language, but with no-one to share it. Emily's disappointment, expressed by the lament "It seems to me

that life is full of disappointments" (*ENM* 211), may sound like hyperbole coming from a young girl suffering a "child's crisis," but it perhaps more profoundly comes from Montgomery – a woman alone with her special language. It should be noted here that Montgomery is writing just after the death of her one kindred friend, Frederica Campbell.

Montgomery's choice of language works in a subliminal way. When Emily reflects on Ilse's tirade, she highlights the terms, "*chit*," "*biped*," and "*serpent*" (*ENM* 119). Montgomery is flagging their importance: a "*chit*" is young girl, but, by definition, could also refer to the bills or government receipts where Emily records her journal entries – her letters to her father. Thus, the terms "*biped*" and "*serpent*" (man and snake) warn Emily in coded language that if she accepts the Eve role, i.e., companion to Man, her writing will be consequently involved.

As they mature, Ilse continues in her liberated lifestyle which includes associating with free-spirited boys. Through them she is able to shed the shackles of womanhood and enjoy such unfettered activities as running along the river banks at dusk. When Ilse is confronted in the principal's office about this behaviour (*EC* 104-5), she becomes outraged and breaks a vase against the wall – a singular act for a student of either gender to perform. Although the explanation provided is that Dr. Burnley's status saves her from serious repercussions, it is more likely that it is because she has developed male-like assertiveness that she is allowed to prevail in this situation. By highlighting the unlikely occurrence with the vase, Montgomery openly emphasizes her own metaphor: Ilse opposes prescribed gender roles by shattering a female-affiliated container (a vase) against the enclosing wall of the principal's office (paternalistic authority). Ilse wants Emily to cultivate male qualities. By suggesting the prank of drawing a moustache on Emily while she sleeps (*EC* 129), Ilse demonstrates that she wants Emily to be more male, so in turn, that she too can get more freedom, and by extension the power she needs to keep writing.

Montgomery shows in the *Emily* series and elsewhere that gender-related societal expectations affect men also. With Cousin Jimmy, she presents the consequences of a common man's becoming a poet: he is marginalized – allotted the permanent status of a child – as if men who write poetry must be considered to have failed to grow up. Under the disclaimer that cousin Jimmy is odd because of childhood brain trauma (Aunt Elizabeth pushed him down a *well*) he loses his inheritance and is denied access to the owning of money, thereby the right to decision making. He lives the insular life of a poet who is barred from the physical act of writing, leaving only the practice of reciting his lines in secret. He is a thoroughly disempowered male who must live by the rules of the aggressive Aunt Elizabeth.

Almost magically kindred, Cousin Jimmy lives his artistic ambition vicariously through Emily. He supplies her with paper, digs her manuscript out

of the attic, and sends it to the appropriate publisher. When Aunt Elizabeth attempts to deny Emily her writing, Cousin Jimmy negotiates a compromise: that Emily only write factual material – an endeavour which only serves to improve her prose style. When Emily is published, Cousin Jimmy is as excited as if his own work were being recognized.

Annis Pratt postulates that the female quest differs from the male quest in that it ventures inward, not outward.<sup>5</sup> The female hero is aided by a male companion, or "guide" who helps her but is not the object of her search. Cousin Jimmy meets this specification. From the magically-appearing "jimmy books," to the ladder that materializes at the window to lead Emily to Ilse, or to his uncanny presence at the kitchen table (with two places set) the night Emily flees from Aunt Ruth's, he is doubtlessly guiding her.

Pratt presents another archetypal pattern in female-artist quests: marriage as enclosure (45-56). The hero is initially free during courtship to foster her ambition as an artist. The male, during this stage, often promises more freedom in marriage than he intends to sustain (or that traditional, patriarchal marriage permits) and once he is the husband, he moves to eliminate his wife's freedom. Her artistic ambition consequently atrophies. Dean Priest and Teddy Kent clearly fit the role of possible husbands, "enclosing" the female artist-hero according to Pratt's model.

Dean is initially a godsend, the "miracle" Emily prays for at the Malvern Rocks. As she matures, however, she becomes ambivalent towards him: she is attracted to his mature, well-educated mind, yet repelled by an undercurrent of sexuality ever-increasing in intensity. Although the adult reader is privileged to know Dean Priest's sexual agenda quite early, it eludes Emily for years. (For readers, his name also suggests professorial and ministerial patriarchy.)

Emily ignores her own intuition when for saving her life he claims "...your life belongs to me henceforth. Since I gained it it's mine" (*ENM* 271). Although she feels as if a "cobweb fetter" has been flung over her, Emily nevertheless continues to seek Dean's approval. During the initial conversations, Dean applies subtle derision toward what Emily rightly terms her "work." He calls it "cobwebs."

As part of her encoded critique of the powers which operate to discourage female creativity, Montgomery develops signifiers which represent both art and the forces against it. Dean Priest is associated with one of the chief anti-art signifiers – dogs. Emily is a cat-lover, and feline references are connected with writing, performing, painting, and the other artistic endeavours. At the Malvern Rocks, Dean sets his dog to stand guard above Emily while he goes for a rope to save her; thus providing the allegory of Emily, drawn to the precipice by the aster (her love of beauty and poetry), being held in stasis by Dean who will discourage her development as an artist while she matures physically.

Dean seems to operate like a force of black magic against Emily's career.

For example, Montgomery offers a cryptic indication that his gift of an Egyptian necklace is the ultimate cause of Emily's failure in an English examination. This necklace has been taken from the mummy of an Egyptian princess who fared well in the Hall of Judgement, undoubtedly for serving her husband. A further suggestion that Dean has some demonic interplay with evil evolves: his recurrent returning to warm and exotic places fits with the belief that Satan manifests himself periodically on earth in disguise. The wording in the note he sends with the necklace – "writing across space and time" (EC 118) – gives him a further metaphysical association.

Emily naïvely takes at face value Dean's offer to teach her the "love talk" she needs for her prose through his gift of a racy French novel which causes her to feel '...as if *some gate had been shut behind me*, shutting me into a new world I don't quite understand or like, but through which I must travel' (EC 30).

Emily seems to know at an intuitive level that her association with Dean is leading her in the wrong direction. While Emily views a cloud with him, Dean presents a metaphor, "There goes the Angel of the Evening Star with tomorrow in its arms" (EC 76). Emily first responds to his mystical language, then she senses in it the discourse of domination – *she* may be the star who is being carried off:

It was so beautiful it gave me one of my wonder moments. But ten seconds later it had changed into something that looked like a camel with an exaggerated hump! [a cruel reference to Dean who had a spinal deformity from birth]. (EC 76)

As a precursor to proposing, Dean sends Emily a poem about marriage, but she misinterprets its key phrase, "shining scroll" (EC 290), to mean fame.<sup>6</sup> Dean had intended it to refer to a marriage contract. This cue to Montgomery's anti-patriarchal subtext portends the effect that Dean's presence will have in Emily's life.

The awakening Emily begins to see in Dean "something devilish," (EQ 34) and Montgomery increases the frequency of references associating him with evil. Old Kelly, cryptically warns her that "he's after knowing far too much" (EQ 73), a statement she interprets as a suggestion of Satanism, remembering that Dean had told her he had once seen the Black Mass. Kelly further implies that Dean comes from a long line of misogynists, who, to make matters worse, are not monogamous.

Dean's censoring becomes outright sneering as Emily moves beyond her childish poetry to writing at a level which shows that she is outgrowing his control. He moves to effectively invalidate her ambition as "childish and unimportant....pretty cobwebs" (EQ 36). The *coup de grace* is his suggestion that she can do more with her eyes (i.e., her bodily beauty) than she can with her pen.

Montgomery skillfully suggests subliminally to readers that Dean is wicked

while allowing him to remain a credible suitor in Emily's mind. Dogs, cobwebs, dead princesses, warnings from Old Kelly, unexplained feelings of profound dread – all work away until Dean finds a chilling place in the reader's subconscious. (It is worth noting that Montgomery herself, just prior to her marriage, suffered a nervous breakdown. Her fiance, the Rev. Ewan Macdonald, implored her to stop writing.) As their wedding day approaches, and as Emily imagines her future with him, it is "but a crippled, broken-winged happiness – not the wild, free flying happiness she had dreamed of" (EQ 76).

When Emily finally publishes her break-through novel, what the reader might consider as an equivalent to Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*, Dean's "black" jealousy rises to the fore and his criticism amounts to a total invalidation of both work and author:

'It's a pretty story, Emily. Pretty and flimsy and ephemeral as rose-tinted cloud. Cobwebs – only cobwebs. The whole conception is too far-fetched. Fairy tales are out of the fashion. And this one of yours makes overmuch of a demand on the credulity of the reader. And your characters are only puppets. How could you write a real story? You've never lived.' (EQ 57-58)

In a deeply distressed state, Emily trips over a sewing basket (a symbol of female domesticity) and falls down a flight of stairs (which represents her fall from the Alpine Path). She spends the winter convalescing in Dean's company. Her decision to abandon writing indicates the success of Dean's methods. On guard still against any revival of her writing career, he tells her that "we'll need a dog to keep your cats in order" (EQ 83). Emily, deadened by this point, succumbs and agrees to marry him, rationalizing that she has outgrown writing.

Emily finally sees the true Dean when she studies his mother's portrait in the Disappointed House, and recognizes fear: "it looked out of her pictured eyes now in that furtive dim light" (EQ 93). Emily sees the room reflected in a crystal ball "like a shining-doll's house" (EQ 94), and resolves to disengage from Dean.

Teddy is the other male determined to waylay the hero on her quest, except that Teddy can be considered more treacherous than Dean, because his motive is better concealed. For example, Teddy willingly helps his mother with housework, despite the teasing he gets from other boys. In spite of this apparently co-operative stance, it is established early that Teddy responds to female attention and servitude. When first introduced, he is ill and needs nurturing; Dr. Burnley assigns Ilse and Emily the typically female task of bringing him back to health. In subsequent chapters, Montgomery subtly reveals that Teddy is a nurturer for no-one but himself.

In presenting Teddy, Montgomery uses other sets of symbols, the colours red and blue, and the constellation of stars, planets and clouds to suggest the alignment of forces for and against Emily's quest as artist. Teddy claims to

have had an extra-terrestrial life before his current one, on a world that revolved around two suns – one red, the other blue. It is not physically possible for a planet to revolve around two suns unless it jumps orbit. This, figuratively speaking, Teddy does. He is a kindred artist (red sun) only when it is expedient for him to be so. He and Emily choose as their own the star "Vega", meaning "falling:" a contradiction to the rising stars connected with Emily's birth and career. Yet Emily seems oblivious to his dual nature. From their first meeting she remains enraptured by him, against the advice, subtly encoded, of Ilse.

Emily takes Ilse's dare to stay in the attic (another reference to Brontë) because she is afraid of Teddy's contempt. This puts Emily in the same territory as she was with Dean – in the domain of needing justification through male approval. The episode in the attic is followed by Teddy's deflating of Emily's vision of clouds by telling her that they are actually "wet and messy" (*ENM* 175). By collapsing her romantic version and replacing it with a scientific one, he is subtly discrediting her art: her imagined "Alpine Path," (Montgomery's metaphor for a career in writing) leads to dream mountains in the clouds.

Similarly, when Emily gazes at "A great, pulsating star hanging low in the sky" (*EC* 177), a reader might associate the star with Emily's last name (Starr) and think she is in effect seeing her own future as a famous writer. Instead, Emily transforms the star into a personification of Teddy, imagining herself as its planet. A planet needs not only a more powerful object around which to orbit, but also (not being autonomous and self-generative like a star) needs light from an exogenous source. Montgomery is clearly alerting the reader to Emily's struggle between shining on her own and revolving around Teddy. The northern lights intrude to remind Emily of a more ethereal beauty, and as a result, she, albeit temporarily, is back on course as a "high priestess of loveliness.... [A]ny human companionship...would have been alien to her then" (*EC* 177).

Emily displays an ambivalence to Teddy: she is attracted to him physically, but she is repelled by the degree of personal compromise that would necessarily follow marriage to him. During a visit to the Disappointed House she decides that she would like to live there with him – but only if she could do so without getting married. From here, Montgomery leads into a discussion of Jimmy Joe Belle who married a dominant female and assumed her name, inverting the norm. This in turn, is followed by Ilse's calling Emily a "sneaking albatross" (*ENM* 287), after Coleridge. Like Mrs. McIntyre, dubbed the "Ancient Mariner" because she has been wrecked by the loss of her son (*EC* 202), Emily is being reminded in a codified manner that marriage will be metaphorically a shackle around her neck.

As Emily oscillates in and out of Teddy's gravitational field, the changes in her are notable. During times of contact with him she appears subservient, often the subject of his contempt, responding like a faithful dog (the anti-art symbol) whenever he whistles. "By a word – a look – an intonation, he was still

her master" (EQ 113). She dreams of, and finally wears for him a dress of blue (the anti-art colour in Montgomery's code). Yet the more she caters to him, the more arrogant he becomes. In his reaction to her physic power, which saves his life, he sounds mean and back-handed:

'Emily, I heard a queer story of you long ago – something I've almost forgotten....They don't burn witches nowadays of course – but still –.' (EQ 100)

By calling Emily a witch, Teddy is accessing the ancient patriarchal practice of declaring any female who defies social norms (which in Emily's case would include having ambition and remaining single) to be inherently evil, and therefore subject to the burning at the stake that Teddy suggests. Moreover, when they meet by chance at the pond, he tells her: "Don't put on New Moon airs with me, Emily Byrd Starr. You know perfectly well that finding you here is the crown of the morning for me" (EQ 122). The "New Moon airs" refer in part to her female writerly airs. In telling her that she is his "crown," he is informing her that he is King and is appropriating her as his property, reminiscent of Dean's calling Emily "my star who is fit to shine in the palaces of kings" (EQ 77).

Teddy, too, aspires to be an artist. But, where Emily remains at home projecting her ambition into the imaginary Alpine Path, the dream mountains she sees in the clouds from her bedroom window, Teddy, true to the male quest, leaves home to conquer the world (Montreal and Paris) before returning (safely, thanks to Emily's special powers of the mind) triumphant.

Once established as a painter, Teddy can scoff at Emily's writing: "What good is that sort of thing?" (EQ 211)<sup>7</sup>. Prior to this, he had been merely patronizing – telling her that everything she had written was perfect. At this point in the trilogy, Montgomery begins to more strongly encode anti-art signifiers in association with Teddy. Emily opens a letter and finds inside the red rose Teddy had given her a decade earlier – now desiccated. The red rose is Montgomery's ultimate code word for human vitality as inscribed in writing: the title of Emily's novel was, we remember, *The moral of the rose*. But unlike the roses usually referred to – the ones in Cousin Jimmy's garden, on Ilse's dresses, or in Emily's hats – this one dissolves into dust in her hand. Emily, returning from the post office with her first published novel, notes that the road she is walking on is red; since all roads in Prince Edward Island were red, Montgomery here specifically flags the red/writing connection. Emily subsequently dreams that Teddy is standing in the middle of this red road, effectively blocking the way. (Similarly, his wedding gifts to Ilse are doubly loaded: a blue chow pup and a blue sapphire ring over which a murder had been committed. The conjunction of the combined blue and canine references is significant: the reader remembers Emily's earlier encounter with a chow pup which tore up her manuscript; the connection with murder in the sapphire ring recalls the Satanic element in Dean's proffered necklace.)



If we read all of Montgomery's symbolic codes carefully, it becomes apparent she feels that Teddy will be as destructive to Emily's career as Dean would have been. Where Dean lies about the true value of her novel, hence destroying her self-confidence and causing her ambition to atrophy, Teddy inflates the importance of his profession to where it suffocates Emily's, a fate not unlike that of the rose sealed in the envelope. Emily succumbs to societal, gender-specific expectations by marrying a man with status, and consequently decides to live her artistic career vicariously through his.

Yet from the beginning, Montgomery has seemed to infer that a third male character, Perry Miller, would be the correct choice for Emily. Early in the story, drawn to the deep well by the stories of murder and intrigue it holds, Emily encounters a bull. Perry appears almost magically, and diverts its attention long enough for her to escape. Emily, apprehensive because Perry is shirtless and hatless (signifying his lack of status) declares herself to be a poet. Perry, impressed by what he interprets as Emily's standing up to the bull (she was simply frozen in fear) decides to become literate so he can develop into a poet also.

The well in question – a ninety-foot-deep hand-dug well adjacent to the sea – is an unlikely feature to exist outside of fiction. It appears in this story, perhaps, because Montgomery is alerting the reader to its true purpose as a literary device. It is a symbolic entry point into a place where stories come from: the story of Ilse's mother who is found in the well, and that of the murdered pioneer. As such it is a focus of fascination for Emily. In its connection with Ilse's dead mother, the well may also serve as a reference to Montgomery's mother's grave – a sacred place that she cites frequently in her journals. Critic Tania Modleski suggests "Gothics" [romances], in part serve to convince women that they will not be victims the way their mothers were and to provide a means by which women can work through their hostility towards their relatively unavailable (because 'victimized') mothers.<sup>8</sup>

Montgomery also emphasizes the importance of the bull. "Bull" is a word that Aunt Elizabeth forbids Emily to use, undoubtedly because of its affiliation with male sexuality. Perry is figuratively protecting Emily's journey to the well (the source of story, hence writing) from the threat of male aggression. The distinction should be made between male sexuality and male sexual aggression: Perry is sexual, as perhaps his lack of a shirt represents at his first meeting Emily. He is not, as is Dean, sexual in a way that is threatening to Emily. Montgomery presents Perry as a suitor who will not thwart her potential. Unlike Teddy, Perry demonstrates a selfless regard for her ambition. On her birthday, Teddy gives Emily a painting of herself – a noble and graceful – gesture except that the gift announces his monomaniacal concern with his own art, while Emily, the subject, is enclosed and framed by it. The less sophisticated Perry gives Emily a laying hen. The hen not only serves to symbolize fertility; it allows Emily, through the sale of the eggs, to have her own money

which in turn gives her freedom to buy writing paper. Despite being a failed poet, Perry is nevertheless a good supporter of artists. He buys Emily her first typewriter. He suspends himself naked from the kitchen ceiling to confront Miss Brownell – at New Moon to report on Emily's habit of writing poetry while in school – thereby demonstrating that male sexuality can be used in defence of Emily's writing, and not exclusively, as in the case of Dean Priest, in destroying it. Completing the allegory of the bull and the well, it is because Emily declines Perry that the bull (male aggression) is able to prevent Emily's journey to the well (writing).

An interesting adjunct to Perry is his Aunt Tom, portrayed as an androgynous figure in a red (pro-art) hood. Aunt Tom is rather like Old Kelly in that both materialize at pivotal times in the trilogy to get Emily back onto the correct path: Aunt Tom is afraid she will marry Teddy, and Old Kelly (with his red wagon) is afraid she will marry Dean. (As a child, Emily like Aunt Tom, has worn a red-hooded jacket; but she identifies with the wolf in *Little Red Riding Hood* and finds Red Riding Hood "stupid" (ENM 129), thus foreshadowing her choice of canine/anti-art forces over red pro-art forces.)

Aunt Tom appears to be an opportunist in hoping her nephew will "marry up," instead she might well be one of the muses interested in keeping Emily operative by having her marry a nurturer, instead of a pillager. That Perry would nurture Emily is certain. He faithfully sleeps outside the door to her room when she is seriously ill. Conversely, in her relationship with Teddy, it is she who does the nurturing, and she who faithfully runs to his calling. Although Perry manages to elevate himself into the professional class it is Emily's judgement, formed by New Moon snobbery, that he cannot override his Stovepipe Town/farm hand beginnings enough for her to take his several marriage proposals seriously. When eventually Ilse becomes engaged to Perry it is understood that the androgyny of each will complement the other.

Mrs. Kent, Teddy's mother, is another seemingly dimensionless character who appears to exist only as a standard formulaic foil, or a tension generating device – yet she too is remarkable as a force in the art/anti-art tension. She has been victimized:

She was a tiny creature, with enormous masses of dull, soft, silky, fawn hair, mournful eyes, and a broad scar running slantwise across her pale face. (ENM 122)

The adjectives, "dull, soft, fawn...mournful" speak for her experience of long-standing submission. More dramatic is the broad scar across her face. The slantwise line running through an object is the universal symbol for "Not Permitted" or "Cancelled". Montgomery is inferring that Mrs. Kent has been somehow cancelled or voided. As the story evolves she herself (in conjunction with unlucky circumstance) appears responsible for her failed marriage and the subsequent death of her husband. Nevertheless, the image of the broad, slant-wise scar overrides any explanation Montgomery inserts, and Emily's

observation that "something poisonous" (*EQ* 123) had occurred undoubtedly points more accurately to the truth.

Mrs. Kent, like Aunt Tom, ultimately serves as a guide for Emily on her quest. If Emily's writing career is in jeopardy from marrying Teddy, then it logically follows that Mrs. Kent is an ally when she tries to disrupt the marriage by burning Teddy's love-letter to Emily. Perhaps Mrs. Kent is a prototype, pointing to the future Mrs. Emily Kent: resentful, clinging, and scarred, a woman voided because she only exists through her jealous love of Teddy. Is this, Montgomery seems to ask, to be Emily's role after marriage?

Throughout, Ilse has been warning Emily of exactly that fate. Her advice specific to Teddy begins early in their friendship. For example, buried in the day-to-day activities that she enters into her diary, Emily records that Ilse has called her a "caterwauling quadruped...who doesn't know when to come in when it rains" (*ENM* 180). In the same conversation, Emily states that had it not rained, she and Teddy would have gone to the Disappointed House to look for the Lost Diamond. Ilse is telling Emily that the cat (pro-art) who is smart enough to stay out of the rain also benefits from staying away from the Disappointed House looking for The Lost Diamond (two negative references to marriage) with Teddy. As they grow older, Ilse becomes more overt in her warnings. After sleeping on the haystack, Emily records that her first night outdoors has given her a creative "flash." By morning, however, she has fallen to the bottom of the haystack, and she wakes studying a spider's web (a metaphorical fetter) while Ilse, who is looking down upon her, jeers: "Write a poem on it" (*EC* 178). Later, when they are trapped overnight in the abandoned house (another failed marriage reference), Emily, in an effort to part from her newly acknowledged love for Teddy, sees three haystacks that seem to be shaking their shoulders as they laugh at her. In addition, she sees the reflection of the fire in the stove which appears "like a mocking goblin bonfire under the firs" (*EC* 270). Ilse, meanwhile, has been neutralized by whisky; without her, Emily is becoming tangled in the web of falling in love with Teddy:

this fetter of terrible delight that had so suddenly and inexplicably made her a prisoner - her, who hated bonds. (*EC* 270)

Notably, she breaks Teddy's spell by mentally composing a story, and Ilse, seeing Emily's (albeit temporary) resolve for independence, admits:

'I wanted to talk - oh, golly, but I wanted to talk!...I'd just enough sense to know I mustn't say those things or I'd make a fool of myself for ever.' (*EC* 272)

Ilse also encodes warnings about Dean. When Emily returns from first meeting Dean, she quarrels with Ilse over the gender of a cat. Ilse is making an oblique reference to Emily's falling into sex-based traps when she calls Emily a "hyena" (*ENM* 279), aligning her with the canine anti-art forces. At this point,

Emily goes off to play with Teddy's new dog, Leo (ego disguised as feline). When it appears that Emily will marry Dean, Ilse uses plain English to point out that there must be a trade-off between marriage to him and her writing:

'Dean can't bear any one to have any interest outside of him. He must possess exclusively.' [As she explained this she] ...pulled the blood-red rose that was pinned to her waist to pieces. (EQ 69)

During her own engagement to Teddy, Ilse feels free to overtly warn Emily about him since she is not aware that the danger of Emily's marrying him still exists. She is concerned about his egocentricity formed by a lifetime of being adored by women: first his mother, and then the girls of Montreal. Ilse compares her own relationship with Teddy to a cat trying to outrun a dog.

This business of males demanding the exclusive possession and the non-assertion of females can be seen in Montgomery's allegory of the poisoned apple – a replication of the Genesis account of the Garden of Eden, – in a chapter titled "A Daughter of Eve" (ENM). (Eve references are abundant throughout the trilogy: in Emily's reaction to the "gift" of the snake in the schoolyard, and the snake that Aunt Nancy keeps in a *jar* beside her Jacobite/Presbyterian heirlooms.) Emily reaches for the apple which Lofty John (elevated male) falsely declares to be poisonous. When Aunt Elizabeth confronts Lofty John about his lie, he reacts by threatening to cut down the woods that protect Cousin Jimmy's garden. The situation is mediated by a priest who suggests that Emily submit to Lofty John *as a lady* and beg forgiveness. The priest has many of Dean *Priest's* attributes. He is deceptively kindly in his paternalism; he is "owned" by a black cat (a Satanic reference). Emily submits, and Lofty John in turn acknowledges that it is her ladylike actions he is rewarding by saving the garden. In this we might see the false myth of male superiority as portrayed in the Biblical account of Eve causing the Expulsion from the Garden of Eden by her forceful action of eating the forbidden apple. Montgomery uses this to demonstrate how the false myth of Eve applies to all subsequent assertive women. By submitting and becoming "ladylike" (unassertive) Emily is able to save the garden.

When Emily is suspended between life and death on the Malvern Rocks she thinks of two things: Lofty John's poisoned apple and Ilse's mother. Ilse's mother had been figuratively buried by the misogyny of her husband, Dr. Burnley, who believes her to have sailed away on the ship "The Windy Lady." Interestingly, this ship's name sounds like a corruption of "The Wind Woman," Emily's inclusive term for landscape, for female creativity, and for the voice that liberates her from repression. As the story unfolds, Dr. Burnley, a rabid woman-hater, changes dramatically to become immediately nurturing and loving towards Ilse, after Emily, driven by the powers of her mind, goes to the place from where her stories come (the well) and restores Ilse's mother's reputation by finding her body there – in a way, resurrecting her.<sup>9</sup> In a female

messianic way, this brings peace and love not only between Ilse and her father, but between Emily and the patriarchal Aunt Elizabeth.

That could have been Emily's life mission: through a female language to enable women to arise from male-induced closure and erasure. But she terminates her quest in favour of following the norms for her gender. She could have brought her future readers up from a metaphoric death. (Mrs. Kent tells Emily: "I have been dead – and in hell – but now I am alive again....It's you who have done this..." [EQ 202]). Instead, Emily ignores the warnings, encoded or otherwise, of her kindred spirits: Ilse, Perry, Cousin Jimmy, Aunt Laura, Aunt Tom, Mrs. Kent, Old Kelly, Aunt Nancy. The result is that Emily is first damaged by Dean, then subsequently leashed by Teddy.

When Emily was writing, the prospect of receiving a "thin" letter was wonderful as it meant an acceptance for publication. A "fat" letter left her horribly dejected. For a wedding present, Dean gives Emily a "fat" letter: the deed to the Disappointed House. Emily gets her husband, her house; she forfeits her ambition, her career, and her life's mission. Ilse, Emily's "male" shadow, after breaking the Victorian *rose*-patterned tea set, escapes her wedding by jumping from the bedroom window like a cat.

But for Emily the canine/blue forces prevail over the feline/red ones, and Montgomery is able to convey through Emily's failure, the unfathomable courage it must have taken for a young woman from Cavendish, Prince Edward Island, during the Victorian era, to stay true to her own quest: to undertake her disciplined and lonely apprenticeship as novelist, as she, an attractive woman to men, resisted both before and after her marriage the demise of her career through gender-enclosed atrophy.

#### NOTES

- 1 The *Emily Series* includes: *Emily of New Moon* (1923); *Emily climbs* (1925), McClelland and Stewart-Bantam editions, Toronto: 1981; and *Emily's quest* (1927) McClelland and Stewart (New Canadian Series) Toronto: 1989 (hereafter ENM, EC, EQ).
- 2 Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Writing beyond the ending: Narrative strategies of twentieth century women writers* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1985).
- 3 Entries in the unpublished manuscripts of the complete journals of L.M. Montgomery, held at the University of Guelph.
- 4 In her journals, Montgomery describes the dilemma she herself faced repeatedly as a young woman: she wanted to associate with young males because they were active and adventuresome, but because of norms, her interest was constantly misconstrued as romantic. See *The selected journals of L.M. Montgomery Volume 1, 1889-1910* eds., Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1985).
- 5 *Archetypal patterns in women's fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1981). The distinction between a male and female quest might be illustrated by the difference between Emily's and Teddy's quests. Both aspire to be artists. Emily remains at home projecting her ambition into the imaginary Alpine Path, the dream mountains she sees in the clouds from her bedroom window. Teddy, true to the male quest, leaves home to conquer the world (Montreal and Paris) before returning (safely, thanks to Emily's special powers of the mind) triumphant.

- 6 This phrase comes from "Lines to the Fringed Gentian," an obscure 19th-century poem. Montgomery credits her notion of "The Alpine Path" to it. *The selected journals of L.M. Montgomery Vol. II, 1911-1921*, eds., Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987) 201.
- 7 Virginia Woolf, in *A room of one's own* (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1929) 52, states that the world said to women writers: "What's the good of your writing?"
- 8 *Loving with a vengeance: Mass-produced fantasies for women* (New York: Archon, 1982) 83.
- 9 Interestingly, the process of getting Dr. Burnley to accept females as fellow humans begins when Emily shows him the wet and messy bags of wool in his attic which remain after she had doused the fire. They are linked to the "wet and messy" clouds, Teddy's term for the clouds, of Emily's Alpine Path. Ilse dares Emily to go to the attic; Emily produces the "wet and messy" bales (her clouds i.e., her works) which dramatically change Dr. Burnley. Note that it is a male who is liberated here by female enlightenment.

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