

clean-up men's filth as housewife or servant until the woman has come to be identified with filth; through common speech and writing where the structures of language are sorely wanting when it comes to describing activities and qualities of being that pertain specifically to women; to a sweeping denunciation of more than two thousand years of art, philosophy, thought and logic, all half-disciplines for having ignored half the human race. The summum of these absurdities, according to Bersianik, is incarnated in Sigmund Freud who appears in the novel in the guise of 'Saint Siegfried' whose 'Sermon on the Mount' reveals to mankind the primacy of the penis and its corollary concerning woman as a mutilated creature. Bersianik makes a brilliant reply, eulogizing the 'primacy of the hole.' Both men and women are riddled with holes that make life both possible and pleasurable and sometimes painful. We breathe air through our nostrils. We speak to each other through the mouth. The surface of the skin is covered with pores which breathe, expand and contract in close and vital rapport with our surroundings. The woman receives and partakes of man's being through her sex; and, of course, were it not for the hole at the end of the man's penis he would find the union with a woman quite frustrating. The touch of humour is typical of Bersianik as is the rather sound truth she puts forth. This 'eulogy of the hole' is one example of how Bersianik challenges the very foundation of myths that have gained acceptance in the past two millenia. The

author's sense of style, her sure dramatic touch, heighten the impact of her polemics to the point where her ideas become imaginatively as well as logically convincing.

In short, a great work of art such as L'Euguélionne extends the reaches of the mind in the two opposing directions of the conscious and the unconscious. Simultaneously as we achieve greater consciousness, that unknown base of the unconscious expands greatly in us. We become infinitely more aware and more mysterious creatures for having read Louky Bersianik's L'Euguélionne.

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The Wheel of Things: A biography of L. M. Montgomery, Author of "Anne of Green Gables" Mollie Gillen. Don Mills: Fitzhenry & Whiteside Ltd., 1975. Pp. 200.

When I saw Mollie Gillen's biography of Lucy Maud Montgomery in a Halifax bookstore last December I quickly bought and read it. Like so many Canadian women (and indeed women in the United States, Europe and Japan) I was virtually raised on the Anne books and wanted to know more about their author. It has always seemed remarkable to me that the creator of so popular a character as the intelligent, imaginative and accident-prone Anne Shirley (it is the Anne of

the first book I remember and respect) should herself remain such a mystery to her audience. I attributed this mostly to the colonial spirit in Canada which has resulted historically in Canadians giving little attention to their writers, but discovered that there are other reasons why we know so little about Montgomery, reasons that have to do with her role as female writer in early to mid twentieth-century Canada. I also assumed I would be reading a success story about how a semi-orphaned girl from rural Prince Edward Island took the international publishing industry by storm, was loved by millions and lived happily ever after. But the truth is that Montgomery's life was little short of tragic, both in terms of her unhappy marriage and her personal sense of failure as an artist. Gillen puts together the pieces of Montgomery's life, mostly from her letters, and the result is a study that is important not only for what it tells us of the author of the Anne books but also as a prototype of the difficulties of the female writer in Canada during this period.

The special value of Gillen's biography is that she discovered the letters Montgomery wrote to her pen-friend, George Boyd MacMillan of Aberdeen, Scotland, from 1903 when she started to think seriously of a career as a writer to her death in 1942. These letters are extremely important for an assessment of Montgomery's life and character, for in them she poured out her deepest thoughts and feelings. A true writer,



Lucy Maud Montgomery at 16 years.
Courtesy of the Public Archives of Canada

she could express herself best on paper. There is a paradox here. Montgomery died considering herself a failure because she churned out the popular children's literature her audience demanded rather than remaining faithful to her early ideal of being a serious writer. However, if one studies the excerpts Gillen supplies from the letters, one finds that Montgomery has unwittingly given form in a profound, psychological, agonizing way to the situation of the female writer in Canada during her time, a period in which women in this rural-presbyterian country were expected to conform strictly to traditional role expectations.

Montgomery was born in Clifton, Prince Edward Island, in 1874 of Scottish ancestry. Her mother died when she was an infant and her father left her with her maternal grandparents to seek his fortunes in the west. Her childhood was a lonely one, spent in the home of an aged and severe couple, but she took consolation in the natural beauty of the countryside and in her own fertile imaginative world. She started to write poems and short stories at an early age and was publishing them with remuneration in local and even national and American periodicals while still a teenager. She excelled in school and attended Prince of Wales College in Charlottetown for a year, leaving with a teacher's certificate, and after a year of teaching attended Dalhousie University. A second stint at teaching was cut short by the death

of her grandfather MacNeill and she had to return home to care for her grandmother. With the exception of a period of about eight months when she worked in Halifax as a newspaper woman for the Daily Echo (an evening edition of the Halifax Chronicle), she remained with her grandmother until her death in 1911. These were very unhappy years, characterized by the dull routine of caring for the old and often unappreciative woman, the forced subservience of Montgomery's own desires and ambitions to the role of dutiful granddaughter, and the unfairness of the traditional family that bestows second-class status on the spinster. However, Montgomery continued to write during this period and it was not uncommon for her to realize several hundred dollars a year by her pen. It was also during this time that she started her pen-friendships with Ephraim Weber of Alberta whom she met three times during her life and George Boyd MacMillan whom she met only once, on her honeymoon in Scotland. These men were "kindred spirits" and fellow writers, though never as famous as Montgomery. The most happy event for Montgomery during this period was the publication and instant success of Anne of Green Gables in 1908.

Montgomery's marriage to Ewan MacDonald, a Presbyterian minister, in 1911, and her exile to Ontario where her husband obtained a charge, were in many ways tragic mistakes. MacDonald, she discovered after their marriage, was a

manic depressive, subject to bouts of melancholia brought on by his conviction that he was damned. Not only did Montgomery have to perform the role of minister's wife, an arduous one and one that she did not shirk because of strong feelings of duty, but also she had to keep up a front of normalcy in the community during her husband's difficult times. Added to this were the care and rearing of two sons. Montgomery had substituted the role of dutiful granddaughter for those of dutiful wife, mother and community leader. Further, the pressures from her publishers and audience to produce more and more Anne books were strong, and Montgomery had long since grown tired of Anne whom she referred to early on as "That detestable Anne." She desperately wanted to progress as a writer beyond children's literature, but her upbringing which stressed the importance in a woman of subservience to others and her social and family circumstances would not allow it. She maintained personal privacy in spite of her publisher's requests for a biography partly because of a desire to protect her family and community life but also because she was afraid of what a biography might reveal of her frustrations as a writer.

Montgomery's letters reveal a steady darkening of her outlook in her last years. Disappointments concerning her sons, the worsening of her husband's condition, continued demands from her publisher for books she could no longer bear to write and the Second World War

finally broke her. She died in 1942, as spiritually alone as she had been throughout her life, except for her correspondence with Weber and MacMillan which she kept up to the end. Gillen aptly employs the image of being caught up in "the wheel of things," or pressures that she could not control, to represent Montgomery's life.

Gillen's biography makes interesting reading and is well illustrated with photographs. However, it makes clear the need for the publication of Montgomery's letters which will without doubt reveal the woman more immediately and accurately. Also, a more critical and thorough assessment of Montgomery's writing in relation to her life and letters must yet be done.

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Half the Human Experience: the Psychology of Women Janet Shibley Hyde and B.G. Rosenberg. Lexington: D. C. Heath & Company, 1976. Pp. 306.

A book subtitled "The Psychology of Women" might be expected either (a) to present its own theory of such a psychology, or (b) to review and evaluate other theories and the empirical evidence that gives them support.