“The Window Opens on a World of Wonder and Beauty”: Windows as the Eyes of the Soul in Montgomery’s Fiction

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Windows permeate the fiction of L.M. Montgomery and feature prominently in her journals.They are not only physical places of looking and seeing but also symbolic spaces for dreaming and visions. Building on the foundation created by Elizabeth Epperly’s analysis of Montgomery’s visual imagination, as well as work by scholars such as Irene Gammel, Laura Higgins, and Val Czerny, and framing the discussion with the theoretical work of Liana F. Piehler, Begum Ozden Firat, and Georg Simmel, this presentation explores the connections Montgomery draws between windows and internal and external vision. Montgomery’s journals often speak of windows as portals to the outdoor world and places for “indulging in day-dreams”(10 May 1893), and her heroines do the same. Examining the common thread of window imagery in Anne of Green Gables, Emily of New Moon, Jane of Lantern Hill, and Pat of Silver Bush reveals fascinating patterns of similarity and difference in each protagonists’ connections to the world and themselves. Each girl views windows as “threshold spaces ... that allow her to be connected to the outdoors, even when within domestic interiors” (Piehler 2004). This sense of freedom is also shown in the ways windows become portals that facilitate each girl’s connection to her innermost feelings and dreams. Additionally, windows are essential beacons representing home, family, and safety or protection. Montgomery’s windows and their symbolic nature regularly echo the characters’ situations and emotions and create liminal spaces for escaping reality and developing clarity of personal vision and maturation of spirit.

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About the Author: Rebecca J. Thompson is a Librarian and Coordinator of Instruction and Reference Services at King’s College, PA and stays close to her roots as an English major through her work as a Montgomery scholar. Her research focuses on spatial theory, particularly in regards to the intersection between the external and internal. She has presented at two previous LMMI conferences, and her book chapter “‘That House Belongs To Me’: The Appropriation of Patriarchal Space in L.M. Montgomery’s *Emily* Trilogy,” will be published in the forthcoming volume *L.M. Montgomery and Gender.*

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