Flowery Passages and Story-Gifting: A Coda

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Through “Flowery Passages and Story-Gifting,” Trinna S. Frever and Kate Scarth celebrate 150 years since L.M. Montgomery’s birth.

This three-part series includes the following:

1) “LMM 150 Tribute: Flowery Passages, Golden Picnics, Golden Roads, and Golden Roses,” by Frever, celebrating Montgomery and her literal, literary, and metaphorical flowery passages, ranging from the White Way of Delight to developmental rites of passage to gorgeous, beauty-laden prose;

2) “Story-Gifting: An L.M. Montgomery Approach to Honouring Births and Birthdays” by Scarth, which considers the intersection of celebration and story, as rooted in place, as experienced by budding writers, and as related to birth, that very first of birthdays; and

3) “Flowery Passages and Story-Gifting: A Coda” by Frever and Scarth. This co-authored reflection weaves our solo pieces together. The coda is our celebratory birthday toast to Montgomery and to story as we honour all sites of story, on the page and on the screen, in our lives and in our minds.

This joint project—in anticipation of Frever and Scarth’s future book, *Your LMM Story: The World of L.M. Montgomery and Her Fans*, based on their Montgomery “origin” story project (yourlmmstory.com)—honours Montgomery’s work through celebration and parties, stories and storytelling, gifts and flowers.

Hello Montgomery Readers and Fans,

We, Kate and Trinna, have each written a tribute piece for L.M. Montgomery's 150th anniversary, yet we wanted to add one comment more, to take this opportunity to discuss, to write, to story together. So, here we are.

Kate is a fan of Carol Shields's *The Republic of Love*, and we're both captivated by an image of gift-giving and celebration in this novel. The grown children of the McLeods, a couple celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary, "had ordered an immense engraved pottery vase, and into this vase each arriving guest placed a single flower—beautiful," as their daughter Fay McLeod reflects (273). Since Shields, who wrote that "[v]ery few books in recent years have given me the depth of pleasure I've found in [the] first four volumes of Lucy Maud Montgomery's journals," is also a Montgomery fan, it seems fitting to transplant this flower-full image over to Montgomery, to imagine us all, with our tributes to her, leaving a single flower to commemorate our love of her work and our great, glorious gladness that she was born, lived, and wrote.

Interesting, too, that the title of Shields's work, *The Republic of Love*, creates love, in part, as a location, as a place. In our tributes, both of us found ourselves wandering and reminiscing in Hester Gray's garden (*Anne of Avonlea*), and it was Kate who planted that seed in both our imaginations. We also found ourselves mutually at Aunt Mary Maria's birthday party (*Anne of Ingleside*), largely at Trinna's urging. Purely by thematic coincidence, we both took a seat in the King orchard, curling up on the ground to commune with the trees, characters, and stories there. We seemed to be on the same tour of Montgomery's places, physical and textual and both combined. So, it seems to us now, that we've discovered yet another reason we love Montgomery: she leads us into sites of celebration and sites of story. Always, always, for us, those sites are lush with foliage, fragrant with bloom, and sibilant with the soft whispers of trees. Always, the voices of nature, the voices of Montgomery's characters, and the voices of fans sing together (and, to make matters more interesting, not always in the same key!). With Shields and Montgomery alike, with Kate and Trinna alike, and we hope with all of you, these sites of celebration and story are also points of communion with nature and with one another. They are the places where human connection blooms.

So, too, are these online spaces and their printed counterparts … or at least that's what we have come to believe. The *Journal of L.M. Montgomery Studies* is a site of

story. With the advent of Montgomery's birthday anniversary, it has also become a site of celebration. Trinna and Kate have never met in person, but countless hours of virtual conversation and discussion about Montgomery have turned Zoom rooms into places too, places of laughter and ideas, of friendship. Much of this time apart but together is spent talking about the Montgomery "origin" stories we have collected from readers and fans around the world. We hope our book reflecting on others' Montgomery stories, *Your LMM Story: The World of L.M. Montgomery and Her Fans*, will add meaningfully to this tradition and become, in book form, a site of celebration and story. Of Montgomery. Of the worlds she created and that we re-create with her help. Of one another and all of us. Let this moment be a collective coda to our individual songs and one more flower in the vase of tributes to Montgomery. Thank you, Montgomery, for giving us these places to gather together and celebrate. We celebrate for, because of, and with you.

About the Authors: Trinna S. Frever is a fiction writer and scholar who holds a bachelor's degree in two fields (English and Psychology) from the University of Michigan and master's and doctoral degrees in English from Michigan State University. Frever's creative and scholarly interests intertwine, focusing on interconnections among oral storytelling, music, dance, visual arts, print fiction, and the ceaseless boundaries of imagination. An established Montgomery scholar, Frever has presented at 11 L.M. Montgomery Institute conferences, published more than seven essays on Montgomery's work, and taught UPEI's signature course on L.M. Montgomery. Frever's current Montgomery project, together with Kate Scarth, explores readers' personal responses to Montgomery's work. Learn more at trinnawrites.com and yourlmmstory.com.

Kate Scarth is the Chair of L.M. Montgomery Studies at the University of Prince Edward Island. Scarth is the writer/presenter of an Audible Original, "The Life and Works of L.M. Montgomery," part of The Great Courses; the founding editor of the *Journal of L.M. Montgomery Studies*; and co-coordinator of Your L.M. Montgomery Story with Trinna S. Frever, a project that has collected Montgomery fan stories from 23 countries. Learn more at katescarth.com and on Instagram @katescarth

Banner Image: Left - from *Anne of Green Gables: A Graphic Novel*, adapted by Mariah Marsden, illustrated by Brenna Thummler, Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2017.

Right - from *Anne Arrives*, adapted by Kallie George, pictures by Abigail Halpin, Tundra Books, 2019.

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