

# “There’s Minny a One in Ould Ireland”: Judy Plum’s Witchcraft of Irish Stereotypes and Storytelling

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Let us go forth, the tellers of tales, and seize whatever prey the heart  
longs for, and have no fear. Everything exists, everything is true,  
and the earth is only a little dust under our feet.

— W.B. Yeats, *The Celtic Twilight*

**T**HICKLY ACCENTED SERVANTS — sidelined in terms of class, education, and cultural origins — have often fulfilled the role of a hedge sage, a wise figure in possession of folkloric wisdom. They speak in dialect to contrast the normative values of more urbane central characters. However, their lack of social status is somewhat redeemed by their having knowledge associated with an older, albeit superstitious, world. These characters often have peripheral memories and viewpoints that, at least in a background way, fill in crucial plot gaps. Since they are geographically distanced from the centre of British civilization, the peoples collectively understood as Celtic — the Welsh, the Scottish, and especially the Irish — have provided a stock of dependable tropes for fiction. The stage Irishman, particularly in its more racially charged representations, can seem a trivializing caricature. While, at first glance, some such rural stereotypes may appear endearing and complementary, they impose shallow and cartoonish depictions of roguish folk fresh from the bogs. L.M. Montgomery’s most sustained effort at a character born and raised in the old country, Judy Plum, seems to represent another iteration of this problematic portrayal of Irish ethnicity. Although likeable, dependable, wise, and quick with the blarney, she exists as very much an appendage to the plot. Throughout *Pat of Silver Bush* and *Mistress Pat*, her accent, which includes hackneyed vowel registers and regionalized idiosyncrasies, marks her as imaginatively invented as much as culturally distinct. Given the sombre tone of both *Pat* novels, perhaps Judy’s register is intended to be that of comedic

relief. However, as Judith Miller has demonstrated, accent and speech feature as dramatic flair in Montgomery's oral storytelling and narrative stylistics, which blend fiction with tradition through variance in voicing. So, in assessing Judy Plum, we must consider what purpose an unmarried Irish woman would have in these novels — indeed, why would Montgomery have resorted to an ethnic typology that is unsettlingly cloying and often silly?<sup>1</sup> Has she simply circulated, unwittingly or deliberately, an offensive ethnicized narrative?

Certainly, Prince Edward Island's sense of connection to the old country, particularly Scotland, as Mary Henley Rubio has noted, informs the historical self-perceptions of many of Montgomery's characters. They refer to transatlantic sources for the genealogy of their religion, politics, ethnic appearances, and social positions in the new world.<sup>2</sup> Yet Montgomery's works feature very few characters who are actually born and raised abroad, most being Canadian in birthplace and extraction, with little that marks their original cultural backgrounds other than names and ancestries. Judy Plum is a peculiar exception: Irishwoman, immigrant, servant, world traveller, storyteller, witch, prude, and spinster. Her character displays an excess of these Irish typological traits, all in various ways attributed to the universal temperament of her homeland.<sup>3</sup> Equipped with an overwrought pseudo-dialect, Judy appears to be a good example of why Montgomery rarely created non-local characters.

Either intentionally or as a result of Montgomery's creative mismanagement, Judy displays some of the most unappealingly plastic qualities of ersatz Irishness that were all too common in nineteenth-century depictions. She speaks with an impenetrable accent and liberally peppers her speech with anachronistic slang. She repeatedly invokes the forces of witches, fairies, and other supposed Celtic superstitions. These exaggerated qualities, combined with the incessant emphasis on her powers as a witch-storyteller, perhaps reveal Montgomery's personal interest in the Celtic as emblematic of a particular genre of narrative: the folkloric fantastic. The *Pat* novels gush with praise for Ireland as a land profoundly enchanted, a magically charged other to routinely picturesque Prince Edward Island. Judy Plum does nothing to undermine this romanticism. A conflicted nostalgia accompanies her belief that immigration has dampened her magical powers, since the contrasting modernity of Canada lacks the spiritual attunements of her homeland:

“But there isn’t . . . not in Canady innyhow. That’s the worst av a new land where nather God nor the divil have had time to be getting much av a hold on things. Now, if there was a wishing well here like there was in me home in ould Ireland” (*Silver Bush* 132). Extraction matters: as Judy often reminds Pat, her skills of witchery were inherited through the lineage of female wisdom and intergenerational Irish spellcraft that goes back to the misty past.

With such emphatic reminders of Ireland as the land of fairies, and Judy Plum as their chosen daughter, she can be seen as a poorly executed, or at least substantively underdeveloped, character whose entire narrative presentation takes the form of exaggerated displays of archly performed Irishness. Her own background is decidedly superficial, ahistorical, and lacking in meaningful detail or specifics of place. We are continually told of how she was born in Ireland and how she “‘worked out’ in her teens . . . in a ‘castle’ no less” (*SB* 5). But where in Ireland? And when? No dates or locations are given, making the allusions to Ireland feel generic rather than reflecting actual memories. The only geographical references Judy makes to her formative years are the imprecise memories of Castle McDermott, a place whose only real function, at least as pertaining to her stories, is to house ghosts. Such a background detail is decidedly Celtic-Gothic, since Judy’s stories depend on a “Celtic Twilight” version of the emerald isle as a ready repository of “leprechauns and banshees and water-kelpies and fascinating beings like that” (*SB* 2).

Judy Plum, in fact, plays into the rumours among the Canadian characters that she has some sort of supernatural cast. When asked if she is a witch, she replies, “I might be having a liddle av it in me, though I’m not be way av being a full witch” (*SB* 3). She enjoys implying that her Irish heritage means that she has a good dose of feminine sorcery in her blood: “There may niver be a witch in P. E. Island but there’s minny a one in ould Ireland even yet. The grandmother av me was one” (*SB* 2-3). In all her movements, moreover, she is shadowed by her familiar, a lanky black cat, which — like Judy herself — “had come from nowhere apparently, not even having been born like other kittens” (*SB* 7).

The *Pat* novels have received considerably less attention than the more recognized *Anne* or *Emily* series; thus, no specific treatments have been given to the character of Judy Plum.<sup>4</sup> As for Montgomery’s familiarity with the Celtic, the selected journals currently in print do not

reveal any detailed research that she did on Ireland, so the sources of her depiction are difficult to pin down.<sup>5</sup> She does show interest in contemporary Irish authors, especially W.B. Yeats and Bernard Shaw. While Yeats, in particular, may have been an influence, Montgomery's presentation of Judy also hearkens back to the hyperbolized species of apes and angels that Lewis Perry Curtis documents in a 1971 monograph on portrayals of the Irish in Victorian caricatures. Curtis, in assessing how Americans imagined racist discourses, places emphasis on how, in a regressive anthropology, cartoons depicted Irish women as ape-like, in contrast to Victorian ideals of the feminine. Augmenting Curtis's research, Maureen Murphy notes that many popular magazines in Canada and America presented stereotypes of Irish domestic servants, who were universally "generous and hospitable to their families" for whom the "resources of their households subsidize their kind impulses" (166). Murphy finds that, in the circulation of these cartoon portrayals of Irish ethnicity, the older Irish domestic servant invariably has an affected accent, archaic mannerisms, and a touch of bellicose behaviour that marks her as unlearned in social graces (167).

But Judy Plum suggests a form of agency uncharacteristic of these stereotypes. Mindful of the major points of Rubio's essay "Subverting the Trite: L.M. Montgomery's 'Room of Her Own,'" we need not dismiss Judy entirely as an example of stock characterization but instead should look more keenly at the subversive nuances of her self-stylization. As Rubio remarks generally in regard to Montgomery's work, an awareness of her interest in social satire must inform those readings that would otherwise overlook the counter-normative qualities of her character's seemingly cloying attributes.

In studies on the affectation of Irishness for atmospheric effect or expedient typecasting of women, critics generally find that the most commonly employed markers are barely decipherable accents, emotional turbulence, superstitious inclinations, domestic sacrifice, and fervent religiosity. Judy Plum's most obvious means of declaring her Celtic origins is her accent. As Rubio and Waterston note in their editorial comments on the later volumes of the *Selected Journals*, Montgomery's use of rustic dialects is something of a departure from her earlier fastidiousness with correct language. Montgomery herself notes with much derision how she finds affected dialect to be comical and twee. "When she begins to imitate the peculiar and unforgotten dialect of 'The Breeds',

I write helplessly with laughter," she says in registering her displeasure as a reader (*Journals* 4:70). One cannot help but wonder, given her amusement at such stylized speech, how Montgomery thought of her own efforts at rendering Judy's brogue. Judy is an immigrant, mediating time by way of a hermeneutics of emotional self-reflection through storytelling, as she recalls places and events that cannot be archived in an official historical genealogy.

Given that a major theme of *Pat of Silver Bush* is involuntary change, as well as the will to resist it, Judy behaves in a temporally frozen way: she continually enacts an Ireland that is a narrated production of imagination interacting with memory, of sentiment revising partially disclosed facts. The nostalgia of the expatriate is a problematic attachment of affect as a coping mechanism against forgetting and erasure. Judy guards herself, and her independence, with a strategic resistance to change — particularly as the patriarchal status quo rationalizes change as its privileged trajectory. Unwilling to cooperate fully with a masculinist teleology, Judy Plum in her speech acts wards off rampant modernization, and the disenchantment that it creates, at Silver Bush.

Thus, while mindful of the ethnic reductionism of her presentation, I propose not simply to dismiss Judy Plum as yet another Irish stage character. I argue instead that Montgomery's stylization of her Irishness enacts a mode of multi-temporal storytelling, involving references to a mysterious land in her memory that are dislocated and anti-modernist. Judy's real power is in her self-authorship. Given that the Ireland Judy embodies exists only through her erratic words, her stories suggest alternative modes of recollection; they evoke distant origins reconsidered for Canadian audiences. In this way, she signifies a sense of memory that has become detached from its formative origins but manages to convey something of what has been lost through the erosion of personal history as a result of immigration.

Judy Plum's apparent flatness could lead one to suspect that the Irish dimension is simply Montgomery's way of gussying up the story with an affected ethnicity to provide entertainment. Seen this way, Judy seems little more than a vehicle for a sentimental portrayal of Irishness, no different from the stage Irishman that populates so much of English-language literature in the nineteenth century. Given the notoriety of the Irish as being particularly endowed with qualities of the supernatural, an idea enhanced by the popularity of Celtic Revival writings, Judy may

have been Montgomery's way of delivering "old forgotten fables" and "ancient romances," as she has "an endless store of weird yarns of ghosts" (SB 4). Uneducated in the formal sense, Judy, for instance, coyly plies the world with her version of womanly folk wisdom (mostly pertaining to ghosts or child-rearing) from the ancient landscape of Éire.

But to rest easy with such an interpretation requires overlooking how Judy acts as an alternative feminist figure of performative womanhood for Pat's own negotiations with patriarchal authority. I read much of Judy Plum's narrative self-awareness as a critique of the linear logic and utilitarian demands of transformation associated with modernization that also impose upon Pat the anxiety of female conformity. Thus, Judy's apparent witchery, or mysterious powers of sight, allow Montgomery to incorporate a form of critique through the fanciful workings of Irish sensibilities as attuned to the dim kingdoms. There is power in resisting in the margins. As Pat herself notes, "But peculiar people give colour to life, don't they, Judy?" (*Mistress Pat* 26).

The hackneyed depiction of Judy's nationality certainly cannot be disregarded: Judy Plum is the Irish equivalent of a wise sidekick who provides stories and anecdotes as thematic window dressing for those yearning for the old country. But, although the Irish stereotyping is a significant aspect of Judy's problematic portrayal, Montgomery hints at more. Curiously, the text repeatedly asserts that her arched accent, while not altogether faked, is that of someone who knows that voice and accent are self-consciously staged resources of speech: "Judy, who was set on 'witnessing the nuptials,' as she expressed it, had again laid aside her drugget dress and her Irish brogue. Out came the dress-up dress and the English pronunciation as good as ever. Only the former was a bit tight" (SB 265). On several occasions, Judy switches her impenetrable Irish lilt for the swish sounds of the educated Canadian gentility, thus demonstrating awareness of the relationship between oral register and identity in the negotiation of an audience. Notably, the occasions on which Judy adopts a Canadian accent, such as this wedding, are all formal occasions, suggesting that the verbal precision is, in some ways, satirical of the decorous artificiality of such situations.

But then the question arises, what is Judy Plum's natural accent? Irish, Canadian, or in-between — or something very much her own, which is the more likely answer given her mobile transitions? And is not *natural* a rather moot requirement when considering the multi-conti-

ental drift of her experiences or the way her accent resists the assumption that a personal history is a stable sequence of birth from which Judy would emerge complete? The movable accent belies the claim to a singularity of origins, as her constant references to an Irish upbringing suggest origins as a place of departure. Judy associates her shifts in speech with the pretense of different styles of fashion. Metaphorically, her accent coming on and off is closely linked to the clothes she chooses to wear, equating the self-consciousness of social fashion with oral identity: she “doffed her silk and high heels and company voice and was in her comfortable old drugget and brogans . . . and brogue . . . again” (*SB* 50). Judy deliberately experiments with how she sounds, and just how Irish, depending on her audience. Yet, to her mind, the Canadian accent is the affectation, not the overdone Irish brogue: “Thus fearsomely arrayed Judy minced about, keeping a watchful eye on everything and greeting arriving friends in what she called her ‘company voice’ and the most perfect English pronunciation you ever heard” (*SB* 47). Judy has the capacity to stylize her identity through vocal patterns as well as embellished narratives. And this putting on and off of accents suggests that her Irishness, that stable quality of timelessness and rootedness, may not be all that the voice is meant to assert.

Judy Plum may very well be using the tropes of her homeland for some strategic purpose. What if to some extent she is self-Celticizing, matching the stereotypical expectations of her Irishness for personal gain? Curiously, her accent is always unpronounced in her first lines of dialogue but becomes increasingly thick as each *Pat* book progresses. She seems to enjoy romanticizing her heritage, particularly inflecting the mistiness of her storytelling in order to enthrall the children whom she is minding. Through practice, she has mastered variations on the stereotype of the Irish woman abroad, amplifying the markers of Ireland in a way that satisfies yearnings for heritage and history. Given Judy’s background of intercontinental moves, of having to ingratiate herself in various communities and homesteads, the development of a particular Celtic persona — part matron, part witch, and all storyteller — would be a feasible solution to the difficulties of making friends and negotiating with resistant people.

This interpretation of Judy — that she has formed her own identity through deliberate rehearsal and reiteration — is suggested by Montgomery’s narrator, who, having heard many of her stories, notes

that Judy Plum had “taken to locating most of her yarns in Ireland,” implying that local events have been recalibrated so as to be contextualized retroactively in a more ancestral and distant time and space. Judy, it appears, deliberately repositions her stories geographically in Ireland, or the old country (*MP* 92). An expatriate who has lived in Australia, the United States, and elsewhere, she may have cultivated this Irish persona to navigate the differences between herself and the locals. In this manner, storytelling acts as a method of fashioning relationships with others that cross over, without eliding differences, from strangeness to familiarity. Perhaps previous to her move to Silver Bush, Australians — many of whom are of Irish descent — read into her performance as an accented Irishwoman abroad an appealing presentation that connected generations of expatriates to something at once exotic but also reminiscent of a distant, dislocated home. Judy’s hybridity is apparent to all who meet her; the text observes that Judy is “an odd and interesting *mélange*, for Judy had been about the world a bit in her time” (*SB* 4).

That Judy Plum’s tales are deliberate blarney is readily apparent: the narrator notes that the children see outright that much of Judy’s stories is exaggerated (*SB* 4). But the idea of the Celt as understanding matters of the supernatural and fantastic certainly had a great deal of circulation in Montgomery’s time. Both *Mistress Pat* and *Pat of Silver Bush* appeared well after W.B. Yeats’s *The Celtic Twilight* (1902) and other texts derivative of the Irish Revival. Typically, these Irish-themed voices adopt a kind of narrative non-realism for the purpose of ethnic storytelling. They promote a version of Irishness that is enhanced with a particular capacity to remember, through supernatural means, images and stories from the otherworld. One suggestive connection with Yeats is a word frequently employed by Judy: *dim*. As both adjective and noun, *dim* relays the speculative conditions of twilight. It is meant to imply more than nightfall or a gathering of dusk, as “Judy’s ‘dim’ . . . had a certain eerie quality that always gave Pat a rapture” (*MP* 16). Dimness appears frequently in *The Celtic Twilight* as an epithet for supernatural and fantastic presences associated with liminal worlds: both *The Celtic Twilight* and the *Pat* novels make references to “dim Powers,” refer to the fairy kingdom as the “dim nation” and the “dim kingdom,” and speak of twilight as the world’s “dim boundaries.”<sup>6</sup> Judy’s own social status is configured as ghost-like; Judy is a haunted relic with a constant presence that, far from being eerie, comforts with its sense of timeless



dependence and deathlessness: “‘Castle McDermott in the ould days,’ said Judy, with an exaggerated sigh, describing herself as much as a spirit, ‘That was a ghost now . . . a rale useful, industrious cratur’” (*MP* 4). In her Hiberno-English, *dim* is how she vocalizes to Pat the imaginative world of twilight.

It is likely that Judy fled Ireland sometime after the famine; she may have lost her parents during this time and has probably edited this trauma from her memory as a survival mechanism. Despite her tales of encounters with changelings, or of belonging directly to a bewitched lineage, her historical reality would have been far less enchanted; perhaps this is why she says nothing about it. Assuming her accent were even half as thick as the text implies, she would most likely have been raised in a remote rural area with little in the way of economic opportunity. As Judy notes, although vigorously articulate, she lacks formal education and is thus a product of her own self-directed study. She reveals that she left her homeland to follow after her brother — across multiple continents, in fact. Other than her “cream cow,” a relic of pottery that is a correlative to her sense of endurance, she brings nothing from Ireland with her, indicating a dearth of possessions or the lack of finances to move whatever little she may have had.

Judy Plum selectively edits and controls what she reveals about the factual circumstances of her Irish childhood, perhaps due to a troubled personal history of abandonment. “It seems like a dream. *You* never talk of it, Judy,” says Pat, noting her unwillingness to discuss her past (*SB* 197). This wilful lack of disclosure suggests that her obscure origins can, in part, be attributed to her authorial reticence in releasing information that she does not wish to reveal. Judy’s narratives privilege imaginative recuperation over a rote fidelity to socio-historical facts. One might consider then that this hyperbolized attention to a mysterious Ireland provides a wilfully fantastic fill-in for the traumatic gaps in her childhood.

Instead, Judy Plum’s identity is substantiated through her speech acts and imaginative storytelling rather than historical details. Montgomery peppers Judy’s dialogue with Hiberno-English words such as *spalpane*, her rendering of the Irish Gaelic word *spalpin*, a term of abuse for an itinerant labourer of questionable repute. Yet Judy also uses words like *tommyshaw*, a derivative from the Indic *tamasha*, meaning a commotion.<sup>7</sup> Why would Judy not select a word from a vocabulary more particular to her own linguistic upbringing? Perhaps she picked it up on

her travels? So much of Judy's diction rings as awkwardly contrived. On the questions of portrayal and imitation of the Irish, there is much scholarship that assesses denigrating caricatures of the Irish people and the Irish landscape in North American writing. Notably, Declan Kiberd, and Terry Eagleton, among others, have critiqued how such loaded tropes of Irishness enabled a colonial discourse of Irish otherness as well as contributed to a nationalistic trend within Ireland to invent a collective sense of unique identity. Eagleton, in part, analyzes how the nineteenth-century novel, in attempting to document the condition of Irish tenant peasantry, developed shorthand ways of representing ethnic character through codified tropes, constructing "lovably idiosyncratic figures, 'characters' in both senses of the term; and this springs at once from the radical individualism of the dominant ideology, and from a characteristically urban way of seeing" (173).

But what makes her character non-static is the rather hybridized presentation that I have indicated: Judy Plum is not a particularly typical Irish-sounding name. Her speech affirms, to the point of overstatement, a formative Celtic identity that accompanies her cartographic transitions. In many ways, the character of Judy Plum is ambivalent in terms of its ethnicity, not passing whatsoever as Anglo-Canadian, and certainly presented as culturally distinct, if not racially othered, from the normative society of Silver Bush. At the same time, she constantly reiterates her Irishness through vocalization in order to claim a differentiated status that has an allure of nostalgia for the old world. She seems to find claiming an experiential Irish heritage beneficial, even if her actual socialization has been increasingly cosmopolitan. Indeed, Judy adopts, on one occasion, a purist approach to origins, equating mixed heritage with an intermingling of contrary influences. "Maybe it's only the mixed blood in her makes her quare," she says to Pat. "Frinch and English and Irish and Scotch and Quaker . . . 'tis a tarrible mixture, I'm telling ye" (*SB* 3).<sup>8</sup> Pat expresses surprise at what she detects as an unchecked prejudice: intermarriage, she explains, is an emergent but inevitable part of new world life in Canadian society. Judy grows to recognize this is so.

And so Judy Plum exhibits a set of contradictory values in the novels. She acts as a catalyst for Pat's imaginative faculty and so provides possibilities for a womanhood beyond the Silver Bush modes of socialization. Pat's world is enchanted by alterity: her mind "had been peopled by the

leprechauns and green folk of Judy Plum's stories" (*MP* 1). Yet, contrary to this role as an encourager of imaginative freedom, Judy enforces a rather anachronistic social code as to women's roles, the same code that Silver Bush expects Pat to measure up to. In using the old country as her social cachet, she must abide by outdated norms in order to preserve that aura of the unchanging that is, in part, her appeal. In many ways a motherly and grandmotherly surrogate, Judy offers both guidance and caution to her protégé as she tests the limits and variations of femininity available to her. Judy, to some extent, appears to be the kind of woman the young Pat might aspire to be: geographically mobile, self-possessed, and resistant to many gender norms. Although her othered status as Irish, uneducated, without husband, and domestically low class can hardly seem like an appealing destiny, her stories invoke alternative psycho-geographies.

The aura of the wise and alternatively educated crone of the old ways is, to some extent, the unique value Judy presents to her employers; however, her stylistic appeal ensures her continued ability not just to earn a living but also to bridge distances and differences in a personal way besides mere ingratiation. In the Silver Bush world, Judy uses the aura of witchcraft as a self-actualized authority, a claim to power that the brute realities of socio-economics have denied her. Thus, "ould" appears throughout the novel as the epithet of choice for her homeland: *ould* means ancient, an access to disappearing knowledge, an occultic gift not readily available in current circumstances. And to some extent this is her insurance — that, even as she ages, there will be possibilities for her to retain a social identity.<sup>9</sup>

The *Anne* novels explore in detail Montgomery's view that *how* the story is told is equally as important as *what* the story actually tells. Romantic narrative flourishes certainly abound, unabashedly, in Montgomery's work as a way of registering individuality. Judy, like Anne, equates witchcraft, conceptually, with the agency of imaginative storytelling: enchantment comes from the force of spell-crafted speech, the beguiling ability to influence minds with hypnotic suggestion through a well-spun narrative of words. To accomplish this witchcraft, Judy Plum must make herself stand out in contrast to the default normalcy of the inhabitants of Silver Bush and its social circle that speaks in the Queen's English. Far from conventionality, her magic comes from an accent and a verbal style that are not easily replicated in the new world.

In this way, Judy's enacted Irish persona, in part, gives the audience precisely what it wants: an Irish woman who appeals to Canadian nostalgia for ancestral connection, a timeless changeling who possesses endless tales learned near the warmth of a hearth. Pat recognizes this appeal as that of the unreal: "Real life! We get enough real life living. I like fairy tales. I like a nice snug tidy ending in a book with all the loose ends tucked in. Judy's yarns never left things in the air. That's why she's always been such a corking success as a story-teller" (*MP* 134). Her stories, constantly reinforced by her aura of Irishness, ensure Judy has an alternative means of being appreciated besides menial chores. That Pat does not even think of her as a maid shows just how successful Judy has been at making herself understood as a person, not a servant:

"Not a servant? What is she then?"

"She's one of the family."

"Don't you pay her wages?"

Pat had really never thought about it.

"I . . . I suppose so." (*SB* 168)

Successful negotiation as an immigrant has been Judy's method of survival during her years of intercontinental drift. Getting on in years, yet still gifted in terms of perceiving other people's intentions, Judy must realize that many view her, as Pat puts it, as "an old, worn-out servant, a creature to be put down and away" (*MP* 259). Projecting this Irishwitch version of herself, as someone whose magic increases through the passing of time, acts as insurance that she will keep her employment, even as she becomes increasingly unable to fulfill the duties that, in a utilitarian view, measure her usefulness.

Judy Plum possesses first and foremost the power of enthrallment, which is enhanced by the claims of authenticity and experience that give her stories a more legitimate veneer. She is the one who has the "stories of ghosts and fairies and ancestors and 'grey people' that haunted apple orchards in the dusks of eve and morn" based upon first-hand encounters (*SB* 114). Judy suggests that only she has the sort of information, which she coyly describes as both education and entertainment, that makes her unique to Silver Bush: "It's pitying the children I am that niver have the chanct to belave in fairies. They'll be the poorer all their lives bekase av it" (*MP* 10). Pat often refers to Judy in negotiating with her own imaginative efforts at authorship: "Hadn't Judy herself

seen fairies dancing in a ring one night when she was a girleen in Ould Ireland?" (*SB* 18). Judy is aware of the reputation of the Irish as gifted storytellers with commerce in the supernatural, the Celts as predisposed to sacred sight and otherworldly perceptions. Thus, whether it is the posh Canadian accent she adopts or the excessive tones of country Irishness, she undercuts the dichotomy of authenticity and forgery through performative choices. It is impossible to say what Judy Plum's *real* accent is since the changeling nature of her personalized dialect eludes a static point of comparison. Bourdieu's analysis of the linguistic marketplace could be applied to her commodity of atemporal distinction: Judy trades in antiques and eccentricities in a personality-derived economics so as to ensure her survival (37-38).

However, there is, of course, a price attached to this dramatic reassertion of herself as Irish speaker. Judy is treated often with suspicion, othered as Celtic, the hell-bound witch who taints the redemptive narrative of sober Protestant living. During a heated exchange in which someone's Scottish ancestry is referenced as a negative, the accused responds by saying, "Better be sorry for your old Witch Judy. She's going straight to the Bad Place when she dies. Witches do" (*SB* 147). Some of Montgomery's characters, in fact, find Judy pitiable, a disconnected creature of anachronism and paralysis — as one person plainly notes, "We humour her" (*MP* 214). Judy must be careful not to appear as *too* heretical — that is, *too* Irish. When quizzed if she is a Presbyterian, Judy replies, "Oh, oh, I'm Presbytarian as much as an Irish body can be. . . . Sure and I cud niver be a rale Presbytarian not being Scotch" (*SB* 42). This is curious since one would think that Judy Plum would be Catholic — but perhaps she has begun to find this aspect of herself too controversial for her employers. She would sooner identify herself as a witch than as a Catholic, though both run the risk of her being treated with distant suspicion.

For all of her Irishness, Judy Plum's remaining connections to Irish society are thin and nondescript. Although Judy frequently refers to returning, to "run over" and visit her "ould friend," she tellingly never returns to Ireland (*MP* 31). Thus detached, she acts as an embodiment of memory, though imagined in a necessarily decontextualized fashion. Her witchcraft would lose its magic were she to ground it historically in actual circumstances, since her rendition of "ould Ireland" is a mixture of how she wants to remember it and how those who have no

experience of Ireland wish it to be remembered.<sup>10</sup> Those qualities of strongest appeal — rooted, ancient, timeless, imbued with mystery and tradition — would cease to characterize witchcraft were they reduced to rote historical facts: when called upon then to give the facts, she wishes on her grandmother’s “magic book,” referring to the language of intergenerational secrets rather than objective genealogy (*SB* 79). In this way, the meaning of witchcraft as storytelling functions as an older method of entertainment and knowledge rendered archaic and obsolete in a modernizing world. The thematic loss of witchcraft equates to an impoverishment of fancy in the forward mode of the new world:

But there isn’t . . . not in Canady innyhow. That’s the worst av a new land where nather God nor the divil have had time to be getting much av a hold on things. Now, if there was a wishing well here like there was in me home in ould Ireland sure and ye cud make it all right in the twinkle av a fairy’s eye. All ye’d have to do is go to it at moonrise and ye’d get yer wish. (*SB* 132)

And this is very much Judy’s recuperative strategy, using Irish witchcraft as stylized endearment — to change the opinion of a new-world audience, to have them see her as someone of capability: “Dear old Judy! What a matchless story-teller she was!” (*MP* 101).

Judy Plum’s mode of bewitchment has developed as a process of movement and exchange. The whole of her life has involved intercontinental drudgery with ongoing negotiations in different locations. From Australia to Canada, Judy has made her way as a domestic servant, caregiver, and maid. But she refuses to let these tasks be depersonalized. I previously referenced Judy’s economy of personality, and deeply connected to this, I believe, is her labour of caregiving. Through food preparation and domestic management, Judy nurtures integral relationships, especially with Pat. Essentially, Judy develops home in whatever place she finds herself. This materiality of caregiving is crucially interwoven with her storytelling: in many ways, her cooking, to promote health and well-being, is an extension of her words.

Self-disclosing stories are Judy Plum’s currency of personal affirmation in a system that constantly devalues her according to capitalistic valuations of social status; as a woman and immigrant, Judy is very much limited, predestined, and marginalized by bourgeois pretensions. Indeed, aside from the allusions to ancient powers, arcane knowledge,

and private ethnic lore, Judy has almost nothing to distinguish or characterize her in the vicious commerce of modernization. Disconnected and asexual, she has only one romantic liaison, with a presumed drunk whom she dumps soapy water on.<sup>11</sup> The notion of her having any erotic, sensual qualities amuses the Silver Bush girls: “The idea of Judy, in a pink, cherry-blossomed ‘negleege’ was something nobody at Silver Bush could contemplate with equanimity” (*MP* 122). Judy is somewhat ancillary to the active plot lines within *SB* and *MP* and does little in terms of physical action, other than routine chores and planning a trip back to Ireland — the return she never makes.

A connection but not a presence: for this reason, ultimately, Judy parallels the ghost of Castle McDermott more than her biological grandmother witch, whom she scarcely knew. As becomes increasingly clear in *Mistress Pat*, Judy Plum is “old and breaking up fast” (*MP* 209). At the start of this novel, she suggests her own weariness at perpetuating a voice in opposition to change: “I’m clane run out av ghosts,’ complained Judy . . . who had been saying the same thing for years” (*MP* 19). Her health rapidly turns poor at the end of *Mistress Pat*; during an excursion to milk cows in the middle of the night, perhaps a sign of dementia, she collapses unconscious. As Judy nears death, her ability to recall becomes increasingly tenuous and her stories more muted. And so, rather symbolically, she never does return to Ireland despite her conflicted desires: what had only been a home in memory cannot provide a place of burial, so there is no full circle of return.

Judy does not, however, romanticize her situation by expressing nostalgia for an Ireland that she, in many ways, has chosen not to remember. Indeed, she wonders if, were she to go home, those back in Ireland would even recognize her: “And me frinds there have grown ould. . . . I doubt if they’d know me, grey as an owl that I am” (*MP* 8). In terms of her own conflicting and contradictory private life, its secrets and untold histories, Judy knows the pieces cannot be readily assessed: “Folks might be misunderstanding it” (*MP* 262). Yet she must have suspected that, in terms of the endearing quality of her persona, her collateral of Irishness had an expiration date. Unsympathetic members of her immediate society in Canada seem to view her as an old and exhausted servant, a further punitive judgment on her as an immigrant woman. My argument suggests that she has adopted in the performance of her personhood an opposition to this framing: Judy

Plum, through her self-authored alternative narratives, subtly critiques the monetization of modernity as market and commerce, a modernity that values people according to productive wealth and relationships of cash and commodification.

Judy reveals on her deathbed that she is, in fact, more than a ghost, witch or fairy, or peripheral spectre. She is fundamentally a teller of personal tales. Although she can see things that others cannot — a strange and unexplained phrase — Judy concedes that the claim of her witchcraft ancestry was revisionist, an allusion to her agency for self-preservation. Much of her immigrant life required invention and reiteration to maintain the resistant qualities of her alternative subjectivity: witchcraft is feminist coding for the inconstant and irresolvable space of the liminal woman who, according to the privileged perspective, lacks the centre of reducible facticity. And so the sorcery of sayings has been Judy's magic, her outspoken opposition to the totalizing discourses of change that enforce homogenization upon social orders.

Considered from a feminist and postcolonial perspective, Judy Plum's self-stylization reflects elements of both privilege and oppression, according to gender, ethnicity, and class. Pat, conscious of the ways that Judy is typecast by others, becomes increasingly aware in her own maturation of how much Judy's marginalized femininity resists change through the self-possession articulated in her storytelling. The bare facts of Judy Plum's current life from the modernizing point of view are not conducive to optimism: Judy is appraised according to the utilitarian measures of progress as ugly, elderly, and without any financial endowments. In fact, she must speak against condemnations of her sterility as a woman, an example suggesting what awaits those who exist too far outside of the enforced female norms. Counter-normative action through narrative, how she self-defines through verbal performance, is her main resource — to write and speak against the judgments.

Judy Plum's irresolvable status and subjectivity, like her shifting accent, both enchant and hex from the dimness of alterity. There is no simple reading of her character. The emphatic accent suggests an ethnic and sexist caricature, certainly. Yet a closer examination of how Judy manipulates this caricature also suggests an empowered storyteller with feminist self-awareness. Her orature, sometimes uncomfortably reminiscent of nostalgic colonial fantasies of Irish subjugation, is, indeed, entangled with the inescapability of diasporic cliché. Yet her individual-



ism remains resilient despite her being relentlessly migratory, and her adaptability gives her the agency to resist silence and erasure. Much of the animosity toward Judy in the text results from her refusal to be assimilated: she does not obey the tacit commandment given to women to speak only when spoken to. If she won't change and she won't obey, the gossips of Silver Bush speculate, then perhaps she should just pass away. She is understood by the status quo as being like her beloved cat, "so old that he had forgotten to die" (*MP* 3).<sup>12</sup> And, witch that she is, she passes away in a manner much like the black-fur familiar, the one of "so many secret troubles" and unlocatable origins (*SB* 7). Judy predicts her desire for a place of her own in meditating on the death of her cat: "'Gintleman Tom has got the sign and gone to his own place,' she said mysteriously" (*MP* 183).

Thus, her death does not culminate in a surrender but in joy, like *le rire de la Méduse* of Cixous: Judy dies "laughing," controlling the effect of her self-awareness until the very last minute (*MP* 264). Furthermore, there is something resilient in how her memories have become integrated with Pat's increasing self-awareness: indeed, something of the witch cannot be overcome, notably in her "cream cow," the antique relic of Ireland that she carried around the world. Mysteriously, this talisman survives a house fire, a public conflagration perhaps suggestive of the burning of witches. The piece of pottery is very much a symbol in the novel for Judy Plum as a resilient survivor, a woman fashioned by her place of origins but capable of integration in new spaces and new situations. Her value, ultimately, defies the utilitarian modernity of production and trade that detaches people from their places and narrows their relationships through commodification.

Judy herself is a talisman in opposition to a logic of status quo change. Her capacity for longevity and survival thrives on the magical powers of her storytelling — storytelling that is intersubjective but also resists homogenization. Her linguistic stylistics provide a form of critique against the utilitarian demands for change associated with modernization, helping to address Pat's anxiety over its prescriptivist power. Judy Plum's speech acts and stories are hybridized and multi-textual, indicating the operation of a subversive strategy through which Montgomery conceived the feminism of her character. Her witchcraft of words creates an intergenerational feminist bond with Pat that profoundly influences the self-determination of Pat's own womanhood.

Ghosts, after all, are Judy's ministers of narrative interaction in producing meaning in the margins. The cumulative effects of Judy's storytelling, even if one is unable to evaluate entirely its mechanisms, echo through resonances in shared familiarity with her younger friend. Thus, Pat delivers a meaningful eulogy to Judy's influence when she mourns, "Life seemed very savourless now that Judy's tales were all told" (*MP* 266). But what tales will Pat have and with what voicings due to her remembrances of Judy Plum? Undoubtedly, as Pat matures and composes herself through *écriture féminine* — an ethical call that Judy exhibited — the remembrance of her older female friend will participate in the fashioning of her own authorial sorcery, for "to fly/steal is woman's gesture, to steal into language to make it fly" (Cixous, *Newly Born Woman* 96).

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> I offer my sincere thanks to Benjamin Lefebvre, as well as the two anonymous readers for *Studies in Canadian Literature*, for the many helpful and insightful suggestions that contributed to the preparation and revision of this article.

Some of my previously published scholarship on L.M. Montgomery appeared under my name prior to gender transition.

<sup>2</sup> There is a broader context of which to be mindful: in nineteenth-century hegemonic discourses that propped up a privileged sense of whiteness, authors of racist genealogies went to considerable lengths to mark Irishry as a racially excluded other, often physically connecting it to blackness by pseudo-science. Such descriptions resonate with prejudicial depictions of African Americans in the same time period, as Noel Ignatiev documents in detail.

<sup>3</sup> In *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, the drunken raconteur Johnny Nolan offers a typically stereotypical presentation of Irishness, especially an Irish masculinity of debauchery and impracticality.

For a comprehensive discussion of how representations of Irish immigrant women as domestic labourers served classist fantasies in an American context, see Lynch-Brennan.

<sup>4</sup> Existing scholarship on L.M. Montgomery's work more generally can inform readings of Judy Plum by the ways in which they assess the vectors of class, gender, and race.

<sup>5</sup> Studies of *Anne of Green Gables* have previously demonstrated Montgomery's capacity not simply to replicate but also to creatively rewrite Irish literary stereotypes through reworked characterizations. Irene Gammel has even raised the intriguing question "Was Anne Irish?" and examines how some of the depiction of Anne's alternative femininity could be, in part, explained by a progenitor genealogy of Irish heritage (216-17).

<sup>6</sup> Like Judy Plum's stories about Castle McDermott, *The Celtic Twilight* also features tales of a helpful ghost, "a good genii to the living," who inhabits Castle Hackett. See "Kidnappers."

<sup>7</sup> Rubio and Waterston discuss how Montgomery increasingly began to experiment with idiomatic and ethnically resonant language in her novels (*Journals* 4:xxv).

<sup>8</sup> Compare this, also, with the following description Montgomery gives in one of her

journals: "But maybe it's the Irish. I'm a queer mixture racially — the Scotch Macneils, the English Woolners and Penmans, the Irish of Mary McShannon . . ." (3:398).

In regard to racial mixing and motherhood, see Cecily Devereux, who postulates that Anne can be understood as caught in a repressive system in which the maternal exemplifies the highest standard of femininity for an imperialism keen to propagate subjects and subjugation.

<sup>9</sup> Steffler's postcolonial framing of *Anne of Green Gables* and its global reception examines how the production of home in readings of Montgomery's novels is often contiguous with nostalgia for a prior lost home that might be regained.

<sup>10</sup> Judy Plum is not the only idiosyncratically Irish character in Montgomery's work. Captain Jim in *Anne's House of Dreams* also deploys specific idioms that would have been perceived as Irish. Some of his colloquialisms, like "potatoes and point," can be found remarked upon as "Irish, less educated," in Pratt's *Dictionary of Prince Edward Island English* (116). Likewise, in *Emily of New Moon*, Father Cassidy and Lofty John are framed with a stylized rhetorical composition that combines strict Catholicism with quirky speech cadences.

<sup>11</sup> Her only romantic encounters in the novels are with garrulous (perhaps abusive) lechers like the threateningly named Tom Drinkwine.

<sup>12</sup> On the powers of adaptation in Montgomery, see Mavis Reimer, who explores Anne's process of relocation within the spatial management of child adoption: "For many Canadians . . . their need for cheap agricultural and domestic labor conflict[ed] with their fear of the physical and moral 'taint' of the little emigrants" (335).

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