

MONTGOMERY'S EMILY: VOICES AND SILENCES

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Women's art, especially women's writing, has been said to be "fragmentary," put together out of pieces,¹ as a quilt, for instance, is created out of scraps, placed in careful relation to one another. Certainly, L. M. Montgomery's *Emily Climbs* is fragmentary, put together as it is from pieces of Emily's journal and fragments of narrative. Also important are the spaces between the fragments — the silences. The juxtapositions of voices and silences create a complex viewpoint on the struggle of a young woman to become an author, to find *her* voice. As Emily sorts her way through possible models, teachers, and mentors, the reader becomes aware of a judgement of those models. Emily sees them in certain ways, but Montgomery conveys to the reader a different evaluation of them. Emily is trying to sort language, women in her life, men around her, literary models, her own instincts, and — at bottom of it all — some notion of "art." Her struggle is curiously contemporary,² but is conveyed to us in language which is often oblique. Montgomery did not have the luxury of direct speech — especially not on issues of the values of a young woman's life. She spoke indirectly. Her novel has the superficial appearance of an idyllic novel of girlhood, but a careful reader will see something else.

In the first chapter, "Writing Herself Out," (interesting word use) Emily is scribbling away in her diary, the place where she can express herself without guardedness, on "matters which burned for expression yet were too combustible to be trusted to the ears of any living being."³ Her language is repetitive, extravagant, and full of vitality. Almost immediately, though, she becomes critical about her own language, noticing

1. Barbara Godard, Daphne Marlett, Kathy Mezie, and Gail Scott, "Sp/elle: Spelling Out the Reasons", (editorial conversation) *Room of One's Own*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (January, 1984) p. 6.

2. cf.

Godard et al (editorial conversation)

Barbara Godard, "Heirs of the Living Body," *The Art of Alice Munro*. Edited by Judith Miller. (Waterloo: University of Waterloo Press), 1984, pp. 43-71.

Harold Horwood, "Interview with Alice Munro," in *The Art of Alice Munro*, pp. 124-125.

3. L. M. Montgomery, *Emily Climbs*. (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, Seal Books, 1983), p. 2. Further references to this edition appear as page numbers in parentheses in the text.

that she has been using “far too many italics” — as her teacher, Mr. Carpenter, has warned her. He has told her that they are a late Victorian obsession to be avoided. Emily, checking in the dictionary, found that “it is evidently not a nice thing to be obsessed, though it doesn’t seem quite so bad as to be *possessed*” (p. 3). She enjoys the play on words and notes wryly that she did it again (the italics) but thinks it is all right this time.

Emily is fascinated by words, which she *loves*; she spends long periods of time poring over the dictionary (much to the disapproval of her Aunt Elizabeth — who isn’t quite sure why it is wrong to pore over the dictionary, but is sure it is.) Emily exults in the “very sound of some of them,” but “incriminating,” “obstreperous,” “international,” “un-constitutional” — seem to her like the big dahlias and chrysanthemums, over-blown and heavy, unlike the tiny star chrysanthemums which she much prefers and which her cousin Jimmy places artfully against dark evergreens.

Emily catches herself in the musing on words and language — wandering away from her topic, which Mr. Carpenter says is another bad habit she has. He insists that she must “learn to concentrate — another big word and a very ugly one” (p. 4). “But I had a good time over that dictionary,” she concludes as she goes back to her subject, silk stockings and dresses and why she can’t have them. She goes on to write out her disgraces and embarrassments, but it’s not long before she is back to talking about words. Writing out her humiliations in her diary helps because nothing seems as big and terrible when it is written out. “Oh, nor as beautiful and grand either, alas!” Things seem to her to shrink when they are put into words. The height of poetic inspiration or insight, which she calls the *flash* makes her feel as if *Something Else* is trying to speak through her, but when that inspiration is gone, the “words seem flat and foolish.” She struggles to put things into words as she sees them. “Mr. Carpenter says, “Strive — strive — keep on — words are your medium — make them your slaves — until they will say for you what you want them to say” (p.10). She agrees that she tries to do that, but there seems always to be “something *beyond* words — any words — all words — something that slways escapes you when you try to grasp it —.” And yet, she feels sure, the very trying to catch something in words “leaves something in your hand which you wouldn’t have had if you hadn’t reached for it” (p. 10). And there is something in Montgomery’s silences which is worth reaching for.

Emily remembers Emerson’s lines and especially the phrase “one random word,” out of the gods’ speech, which a poet may hear (p.10), who listens carefully with other than his ears and who is tuned to silence. That “random word” is what Emily listens for, and she catches a “little, faint, far-off echo of it” at times.

Toward the end of the chapter, full of digression and energy and frankness, Emily observes ruefully that she knows that she has "'wasted words' in this diary" — another of her literary faults which Mr. Carpenter has diagnosed for her, urging her to practise "economy and restraint." She sighs that, "he's right, of course" (p. 13), but that in her diary, which no one else ever sees, she likes to let herself go, in spite of Mr. Carpenter's prescriptions and advice — most of which she apparently takes to be valid, even while she ignores them. No one — neither Emily nor the narrator — criticizes Mr. Carpenter's caveats. Indeed, Emily sighs that she tries to meet them. But we see clearly that Emily has a vital sense of the use of words, of their aesthetic pleasure, and that her writing is most alive when it is flooded with italics and when it flows outside the rigid control which Mr. Carpenter advocates. The only almost-spoken observation which the narrator gives us is that Emily is "not a proper child" — she lights a secreted candle and works until two in the morning, caught in the delight of working out a new idea for a story with words which came "like troops of obedient genii to the call of her pen" (p. 14).

Determined to be "wedded to my art," Emily has no scarcity of mentors and adult supervisors who would rather she did something else — especially the women in her family. Aunt Elizabeth, fiercely proud and dignified, considers Emily's scribbling a serious waste of time which could be more profitably used — knitting ribbed stockings, for example, and learning how to be gracious and dignified on social occasions at New Moon. Emily is wont to be guilty of annoying awkwardness because she is day-dreaming or pre-occupied in some world of her imagination. Trying to curb Emily's irresponsibility, Elizabeth goes so far as to make going to high school contingent on giving up writing for three years. When Emily flatly refuses to give it up, Elizabeth compromises on an agreement that Emily will not write anything which is not "true." Emily, waiting to hear about Elizabeth's condition notes that Elizabeth is afraid to *name* the condition.

Elizabeth insists on maintaining New Moon as it has long been, in the traditions of the women there before her, and it is, under her management, a very "feminine" place: a place of the new moon, gracious and stately, with lovely gardens and a house lit by candle-light. She gives Emily a strong sense of the "ladies of New Moon," a strong feeling of place and of family pride, and an undying strength of principles-not-to-be-compromised. Emily is, in many ways, a good deal like her Aunt Elizabeth and, like her, values things almost as much as people. Elizabeth regards the written word with suspicion (she reads over and burns old letters from the attic.) She is not given to chatter and is exasperated by Emily's preoccupation with words, especially unusual words and words of the imagination: "If you must talk, talk sense" (p. 21). Nevertheless, Elizabeth's greatest punishment is to withhold conversation. She doesn't "speak" to Emily for hours after she is annoyed by her. Aunt Elizabeth's not-speaking is an analog of Montgomery-in-the-novel; both Montgomery and Elizabeth sit

in judgement, in a silent, palpable judgement, although Montgomery's is less stern than Elizabeth's. Elizabeth may not like words, but she certainly believes in the power of words withheld.

Elizabeth preserves a world in which the womanly arts, as she understands them, are protected. New Moon women are always well dressed, tastefully and sensibly. There is no extravagant exuberance about their dress, but knitted stockings are ribbed — not plain — and the women are tall and slim, if a little stiff. Aunt Laura, another New Moon aunt, softens Elizabeth's rigour into allowing Emily occasionally soft colours and fabrics. Aunt Laura teaches Emily how to sand the kitchen floor in a herringbone pattern and how to arrange pickles in a pattern in a jar. She teaches Emily how to bake a complicated chocolate cake. (Devil's food — but Aunt Elizabeth will not allow those words to be said.) These women certainly do not see writing as an appropriate or "traditional" occupation for a young woman, but they do provide her with examples of art — and most especially of patterning. During the winter time, the flower gardens of New Moon are planned and patterned, with colours, sizes and shapes of flowers in careful juxtaposition to each other and to their settings.

Aunt Ruth, in whose house Emily lives while she goes to high school, has no sympathy with Emily's pretentious use of language, her defiance, or her "slyness" — connected in Ruth's mind to Emily's wish to write stories, untruths. Ruth, nevertheless, for the sake of family pride, encourages Emily to do well at school. Ruth is especially preoccupied with "talk." She does not want her niece or herself to be "talked about" around town. She is well aware of the power of "talk" — a major pastime for the town women. She also knows the dangers of fiction, having suffered in her youth as the result of a story which got around about her behaviour, and she does rise to the occasion when a similar tale is tattled about her niece. She is, perhaps because of her experience, determined on truth, although she has no notion of anything like "poetic truth," which Emily strives for, of anything beyond literal historic fact. If Elizabeth's world is a world where silence and its nuances reign, Ruth's world is the world of talk, and she has acquired the ability to affect the town talk, to turn it into the silence which does not damage herself or her niece. Presumably, in a town like *Shrewsbury* (my italics) there is too much chatter for anyone to hear such silences as Elizabeth's.

The language of some of the women around Emily is all too oral. One of the amusing scenes of the book occurs when Emily, hiding in a broom closet at New Moon because she has been caught in an old dress, overhears visiting neighbour women gossiping about her. Their speech is direct, sarcastic, critical and full of the "tang" which Emily enjoys in her own writing. She is horrified by the seeming hypocrisy of it all and does not think to compare it to the frequent difference between her own thoughts and what she says out loud. Emily herself enjoys watching peo-

ple, reading the "histories written in hieroglyphics on faces" and understanding the "unuttered unutterable things in hearts and souls" (p. 39). Emily, though, worries about the kind of trespass it seems to her to read the secrets which people guard carefully and which she sees clearly. She struggles over the choice between writing beautiful things and things with "tang" (p. 42). She is usually charitable in what she writes about people, but her occasional vitriol appalls Mr. Carpenter, who tells her sharply that her pen "should heal and not hurt," and that she should leave satire "to the great geniuses" (p. 22). She is not permitted to print the language which the women around her use when they do speak. Once again, though, the judgement on Mr. Carpenter as teacher is an unspoken one. Emily agrees that he is right in his evaluation of her writing. She is sorry that she has hurt him, but she does not throw away the offending piece, and when she reads it over, she likes it:

I didn't tear that poem up, though — I couldn't — it really *was* too good to destroy. I put it away in my literary cupboard to read over once in a while for my own enjoyment, but I will never show it to anybody (p.22).

Neither Emily nor the narrator *says* that Mr. Carpenter reacted as he did to the poem because he saw himself as a failure like the man in the poem, and so the poem hurt him.

Ilse, Emily's dearest friend, her own age, is also intrigued by language, but hers is oral. She is allowed to grow up without restraint or teaching, with no sense of artistic "control." She is exuberant and flamboyant, breaking all the "rules," taking pleasure in extravagant clothes and language. She flies into rages where she flings storms of adjectives at people. She does *at* people what the gossiping women do behind their backs, and she does it with unholy glee: "It's awfully *satisfying* to say the most insulting things and call the worst names" (p. 74). Emily infuriates Ilse by writing down what she says, and Ilse, like Aunt Elizabeth, retaliates by refusing to *speak*. Ilse makes no effort to choose her words. She simply flings out whatever comes into her head, with no regard for truth or aesthetic pleasure — never mind any kind of patterning. Ilse's artistic triumphs are in acting and in elocution — speaking someone else's words.

Even Janet Royal, who left Shrewsbury to go to New York and make her way in its literary circles, does not write — she "can only build with materials others have made" (p. 301). The women of Emily's life consider Janet Royal a failure, in spite of her big salary: she "works out" for her living; she is unmarried, without children; she is "as odd in some ways as Dick's hat band"; she has a man's success — not a woman's. Emily is identified throughout the book with her cats, whom she loves, but Janet tells her, "Cats! Oh, we couldn't have a cat in a flat. It wouldn't be amenable enough to discipline. You must sacrifice your pussies on the altar of your art" (p. 300). Janet sighs wistfully over Emily's attachment to New Moon, wishing she felt that way about some place. She is shown as odd and

rootless, with only the appearance of success. The narrative silences around Janet, once again, leave the reader knowing that Montgomery does not see Janet and her offer as appropriate models for Emily. No one who would sacrifice cats to discipline is to be trusted — and Janet is not an artist although she moves in the places of artistic success and genuinely believes that she could help Emily. Emily herself comes to the same conclusions that the reader has been offered by the juxtapositions of other women's assessments and Janet's own statements about what is important.

Unlike the women, the men around Emily *seem* to encourage her writing. Mr. Carpenter, Dean Priest, and Cousin Jimmy all give her advice about it.

Mr. Carpenter, Emily's school teacher, sets out clear prescriptions for her. Avoid: italics, extravagance, wasting words, fantasy, repetition, elaborate words, and imagination. Practise restraint. Heal and not hurt. When Emily writes a "pagan" poem about nature, he is offended and tears it up:

"That poem was sheer paganism, girl, though I don't think you realise it. To be sure, from the point of view of literature it's worth a thousand of your pretty songs. All the same, that way danger lies. Better stick to your own age. You're part of it and can possess it without its possessing you. Emily, there was a streak of diabolism in that poem. It's enough to make me believe that poets *are* inspired — by some spirits outside themselves. Didn't you feel *possessed* when you wrote it?" "Yes," I said, remembering. (p. 252)

This time, Carpenter has destroyed the offending piece. Emily sighs that it is a good thing that he did it because she couldn't have done it. The silences are palpable. How could any poem which evoked that strong a response need tearing up? And that he should not know that a poet is moved by "spirits outside," that a poet is more than a "carpenter" . . . Why does "danger lie that way?" Is it all right for Emily to write pretty songs, but not all right for her to wander into "literature"?

Carpenter discusses models with Emily, but his advice is strange. He tells her not to imitate Kipling — that if she must imitate anyone, to learn from Laura Jean Libbey. Emily never says anything about Laura Jean Libbey, but she must have known that Laura Jean Libbey wrote dozens of ephemeral, romantic novels, with such titles as *The Beautiful Coquette; or, The love that won her*, and *Daisy Gordon's Folly; or, The world lost for love's sake*. Laura Jean Libbey's prose style may have been close to contemporary for Emily, but her themes would hardly have been "exalted" enough for Emily's taste. Why does Carpenter recommend her books to Emily? His suggestion seems again like a warning that it is best not to attempt serious "Literature."

Carpenter is really annoyed with Emily for reading and enjoying Mrs. Hemans' books of poetry, which Emily loves for their flashes of magic and enchantment. Mrs. Hemans' poems enjoyed a great vogue in the middle of

the nineteenth century: Emily reads Aunt Laura's copies of her books. Hemans published several "Collected Poems," which are full of rather gothic poems with an atmosphere of romantic darkness. But many of her poems are about and are addressed to women. She certainly sees woman as long-suffering and noble, the centre of the home and family. Nevertheless, there is about her work some of what Emily would call "real poetry." Hemans writes often about women of "heroic spirit" especially in her volume *Records of Woman*, published in 1930. The following lines, for instance, describing "Joan of Arc, in Rheims", are a long way from "The Beautiful Coquette":

Never before, and never since that hour,
Hath woman, mantled with victorious power,
Stood forth as *thou* beside the shrine didst stand,
Holy amidst the knighthood of the land;
And beautiful with joy and with renown,
Lift thy white banner o'er the olden crown,
Ransom'd for France by thee!⁴

Carpenter tells Emily that Mrs. Hemans represents all the Victorian excesses of which he is trying to cure her. Emily listens carefully to him, although "The things Mr. Carpenter said about Mrs. Hemans were not fit to write in a young lady's diary" (p. 253), and he sneered at her "liking for slops." Emily supposes that "he is right in the main — yet I *do* like some of her poems" (p. 253). After scolding her about Mrs. Hemans, Carpenter says to Emily:

"I like that blue dress you've got on. And you know how to wear it. That's good. I can't bear to see a woman badly dressed. It hurts me — and it must hurt God Almighty. I've no use for dowds and I'm sure He hasn't. After all, if you do know how to dress yourself, it won't matter if you do like Mrs. Hemans" (p. 253).

Carpenter may be just dismissing her now as a young woman rather than a writer. He may — to give him the benefit of the doubt — be realizing that she *is* a woman and so perhaps she should be reading Mrs. Hemans. He could be telling her that she has learned something of art. The art which her aunts Laura and Elizabeth know about. That she does know how to wear the blue dress. And is that an indirect compliment and assurance about artistry? He has, after all, also been trying to teach Emily about art, as he sees it, and as far as he is willing to trust it. Emily herself reports it simply as the first personal compliment Mr. Carpenter ever paid her. She is accustomed to having him harangue her about her writing. She always feels that she should try to do what he teaches, but in spite of herself, she is always disobeying him, with the tacit approval of the silences, which seem to be guarding Emily's struggle-to-become-artist.

4. Felicia Hemans, "Joan of Arc, in Rheims," *Records of Woman: with other poems* (London: Blackwood, 1830), p. 112.

Unlike Carpenter, Dean Priest is always flattering Emily and encouraging her flights of fancy. He is, in Emily's opinion, the most interesting adult she knows. He represents for her the world of travel, sophistication, and European art. His letters (he's the only adult around who writes) seem to her wise and wonderful. He reads to her and gives her a wide range of books to read, encouraging her flights of fanciful imagination. He apparently thinks them appropriate to a young lady. He is jealously possessive, though, and when Emily's writing approaches excellence, he belittles it, with a smile which Emily interprets as saying

"You can scribble amusingly, my dear, and have a pretty knack of phrase-turning, but I should be doing you an unkindness if I let you think that such a knack meant a very great deal" (p. 211).

He becomes more and more patronizing: "I like to see a woman smiling to herself. Her thoughts must be innocent and pleasant" (p. 215). Emily had in fact been thinking of smoke and cats in the twilight and exulting over the possibilities of her future — of her immortality. Emily is not wholly at the mercy of Dean Priest. She writes about one of their cloud-watching evenings:

"There goes the Angel of the Evening Star, with tomorrow in its arms," said Dean. 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! (p. 76).

Emily "survives" through all the advice which these two men offer her about writing — partly because Cousin Jimmy, the third adult man in her life, protects her to do what she wants to do, without trying to control or change her. Cousin Jimmy would have been a poet if Aunt Elizabeth had not pushed him into the well when they were children. He is like an adult child in the household of New Moon. He still makes up poems, but he never writes them down. He supports Emily's writing in any way he can. Most important, he buys her a steady supply of scribblers in which she can write anything she wants. He always thinks her writing marvellous. He mediates between Emily and her aunts when they come into conflict over her writing, helping to find compromises. He tells Emily about her ancestral women at New Moon: "Your grandmother Archibald would have lived on herring tails to get an education — many a time I've heard her say it" (p. 85). Jimmy looks after New Moon, his oddities adding to its air of mystery. Emily basks in Cousin Jimmy's approval, but with characteristic asperity sees that too many friends like him "wouldn't be good for you."

Emily has no lack of literary models. Both Carpenter and Priest provide her with lots of books, and she reads classic authors in school. She is irritated by the women in Tennyson's "Idylls of the King," who didn't seem to manage their men very well. She took a fling at imitating Kipling, even though Mr. Carpenter disapproved. She has definite opinions about

Tennyson and Keats. Tennyson, she decides, is the Perfect Artist, who never lets his reader forget it. He is never caught up out of himself into anything incautious — “he flows on serenely between well-ordered banks and carefully laid out gardens.” He never wanders out into wilderness. As for Keats, “Keats is too full of beauty,” Emily complains. “I feel stifled in roses and long for a breath of frosty air or the austerity of a chill mountain peak” (p. 257). But Keats does have some lines which make her despair of ever trying to match them and others which inspire her. Emily also knows about some women writers. Carpenter recommends Laura Jean Libbey, but Emily never mentions her — or the writer of the Elsie books, whom he laughs at. He also laughs at Mrs. Hemans, whom Emily enjoys chiefly for her language. Charlotte Bronte she mentions only in passing as having genius. Emily reads Mrs. Browning and observes that she (Emily) is more sympathetic to Onora in *The Lay of the Brown Rosary* than Mrs. Browning is. Dean Priest tells her that is because they are both “creatures of emotion” (p. 216).

The most effective and influential model for Emily, although Emily does not recognize her as such, is Mrs. McIntyre, an old Scots lady, who tells Emily and Ilse the story of “How I Spanked the King.” Emily wakened in a farmhouse, with Ilse:

By the tiny table, covered with its white, lace-trimmed cloth, a woman was sitting — a tall, stout, old woman, wearing over her thick grey hair a spotless white widow’s cap, such as the old Highland Scotchwomen still wore in the early years of the century. She had on a dress of plum-coloured druggel with a large, snowy apron, and she wore it with the air of a queen. A neat blue shawl was folded over her breast. Her face was curiously white and deeply wrinkled but Emily, with her gift for seeing essentials, saw instantly the strength and vivacity which still characterised every feature. She saw, too, that the beautiful, clear blue eyes looked as if their owner had been dreadfully hurt sometime. (p. 191)

Emily observes that Mrs. McIntyre is a “very dignified personage indeed.” She is the traditional wise woman, who recognizes Emily as someone special, because of her family, “You will be having Highlandmen for your forefathers?” and because she has “the ears of fairies” (p. 192). She tells the central story of her long life, with the skill of the oral storyteller. It is a story of something she did in the heat of anger and concern without regard for public opinion. When she finishes, Emily asks, “Mrs. McIntyre, will you let me write that story down, and publish it?”

Mrs. McIntyre’s eyes shine and her hands tremble as she exults, “It is strange how our wishes will be coming true at times” (p.197). Emily assures her that she will write the story exactly as the woman has told it. The old woman worries that she might not “be choosing my words very well, but maybe you will be knowing best” (p. 197). She tells Emily that Emily has “the sight” and that she should not be ashamed of having it. “It will not be right for you to be denying it, my dear, for it is a great gift”

(p. 198). She dismisses Ilse as a nice young woman, but one who is not special in the way Emily is. Out of her quiet respect for words and truth, Mrs. McIntyre is annoyed by a neighbour woman, who will be “darkening council by words without knowledge” (p. 198). Emily values the old woman’s story, but she does not understand the gifts which the old woman sees and is glad of in her. When Ilse tells her that she clearly has “some power the rest of us haven’t,” Emily wishes desperately, “Perhaps I’ll grow out of it . . . I don’t *want* to have any such power.” Under Mr. Carpenter’s tutelage, Emily has learned to distrust the powers Mrs. McIntyre understands. Carpenter and Priest, in spite of the attention they pay to Emily’s writing, see her as a young *woman*. Mrs. McIntyre sees her as an artist.

Throughout the book, Emily struggles to find a voice. She prefers to call flowers by their common names — Heartsease, Bride’s Bouquet, Prince’s Feather, Snap-dragon, rather than by the heavy Latinate names in the catalogues. She enjoys the sounds and connections of words, “(I wonder why *goblin* is such an enchanting word and *gobbling* such an ugly one. And why is *shadowy* suggestive of all beauty while *umbrageous* is so ugly?)” (p. 246). When she learns a new word, she is always anxious to use it — to set it within a sentence. She is often amused by juxtapositions: poetry/prose; fantasy/realism; magic/respectability and the languages associated with them:

. . . it seemed to me that I got out of my body and was *free* — I’m sure I heard an echo of that “random word” of the gods — and I wanted some unused language to express what I saw and felt.

Enter Andrew, spic and span, prim and gentlemanly.

Fauns — fairies — wonder moments — random words — fled pell mell.

No new language was needed now. (p. 314)

Most difficult of all, Emily juggles the voice in her head with the more socially acceptable ones — in everyday speech and in writing:

Thought Emily, “Condescending, insufferable creature”.

Said Emily, “*Thank you!*” (p.140)

Emily wonders what the *women* of Tudor England thought about all the events in the history books — always described from the man’s point of view. She tries to come to terms with “the dear, dead ladies of New Moon,” with their determination, elegance, and artistry. She sorts her way through conflicting, confusing models and advice, knowing as Mrs. McIntyre knows, that words can be *chosen* and arranged and must be supported by truth — a truth that is not always apprehended by language, and that to be shared, needs a special language. She also knows how to listen in the silences, so she values solitude, which she would not have had in the

bustle of New York. Young as she is, she knows, "Solitude itself is a way of waiting for the inaudible and the invisible to make itself felt."⁵

At the end of the book, Emily has "a queer feeling of relief that I still have my freedom," and she believes in her future success: "Luckily *I* have a career and an ambition also to think about" (p. 320). She interprets a view of herself in a pool with a branch behind her as a vision of a laurel wreath to come.

Montgomery, through all the voices and silences of the novel, pieced and placed as they are, leaves the reader assured that even in the most trying or involving situations, a part of Emily stands aside, an observer watching what is happening to her and those around her — unrepentant and watchful. When it's all over, she "writes it out," giving it voice, voice on the page, her voice, out of silences created, imposed, or chosen. Emily has a strong sense of what George Eliot calls the persistent self:

Strange that some of us, with quick alternate vision, see beyond our infatuations, and even while we rave on the heights, behold the wide plain where our persistent self pauses and awaits us.⁶

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5. May Sarton, *Plant Dreaming Deep*. New York: Norton, 1983, p. 70.

6. George Eliot, "Book Two", *Middlemarch*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1956, p. 113.