My Turning Point: The 2008 L.M. Montgomery International Conference

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This blog was to be published on the LMMI website on 14 April as part of a series featuring past attendees and memorable moments. It was never published because the conference was cancelled due to COVID-19.

The 2008 L.M. Montgomery International Conference (LMMIC) is most memorable because I presented a paper for the first time, breaking a silence of many years. As English is my second language, I have always been self-conscious about speaking English in front of native English speakers, but before the centennial anniversary of *Anne of Green Gables*, I had made the decision to challenge myself. I had attended every conference but one since the first international symposium in 1994, and I felt that I would be able to contribute something different from what other Japanese presenters had delivered. I wanted to introduce the current trends, activities, and interests of Montgomery fans in Japan.

The 2008 LMMIC, held 25-29 June in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, was the 8th Biennial Conference. The topic was “L.M. Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables*, and the Idea of ‘Classic,’” and I presented the paper “The Powers of Text, Translation, and Transformation: Rethinking the Continuous Popularity of *Red-Haired Anne* in Japan.” In this presentation, I described how Japanese people commemorated the centennial of the publication of *Anne of Green Gables*, including the publication of several scholarly books, revised versions of Hanako Muraoka’s classic translation by her granddaughters, and special TV programs which paid

tribute to the original text, and how Japanese fans continued to enjoy the Japanese animated version of *Anne of Green Gables* (1979). It was the first time that the audience had a chance to watch Japanese anime at an LMMIC.

I still remember the view from the lectern as I stood before the audience and presented my paper at the Delta Prince Edward Hotel. Despite my Japanese accent, the audience members and fellow presenters were very kind to me. I realized that we all belonged to the same community of people who love Montgomery and her works, and that I hadn’t needed to feel hesitant about speaking out if I had something to say. It was the turning point of my scholarly life.

Since then, I have made efforts to present at every LMMIC. Each time it spurs me on in my study of her works and her personality. Though I had previously taught John Donne, William Shakespeare, William Wordsworth, John Keats, and Emily Dickinson in my seminar classes, I changed my focus to Montgomery’s works, which has attracted more students. Since 2015, I have coordinated lectures as a part of the lifelong-study program at my university entitled “The World of Red-haired Anne,” sharing my experiences and discoveries from the LMMIC with the older, continuing-education students. Giving lectures to Japanese readers who want to know more about Montgomery’s works is my pleasure, and often I am surprised at their insights and “Montgomery Moments” when they connect their reading of Montgomery books to their lives.



Akamatsu with Dr. Elizabeth Waterston, Dr. Mary Rubio, and Dr. Mary McDonald-Rissanen at the 2008 L.M. Montgomery Conference. Photo provided by Yoshiko Akamtsu, 2008.

Attending the LMMIC is a valuable opportunity that will “open a door” in your life. Once you attend, you will realize you are a member of a community, and I am sure that when you come back to the conference the next time, you will feel as if you have come home and seen your own people again.

Though the entire world is suffering under the strain of COVID-19 now, I hope the 2020 conference will be able to go on as planned, allowing us to share more enjoyable “Montgomery Moments” in which we discuss and deepen our understanding of LMM and her works, and as this year’s topic is “LMM and Vision,” maybe we all will be able to widen our views on Montgomery and her world.

Note: After submitting this blog, I learned that the 2020 LMMIC had been cancelled and felt broken-hearted. Let’s look forward to meeting each other again in 2022. Until then, we can maintain and strengthen our bonds through the *Journal of L.M.*

Montgomery Studies, Twitter, Facebook, and the L.M. Montgomery Institute blog. Our next LMMIC will be even more precious having overcome the hardship of our experiences in 2020.



Yoshiko Akamatsu. Photo provided by Yoshiko Akamatsu, 2008.

Yoshiko Akamatsu, Ph.D., is a professor at Notre Dame Seishin University in Okayama, Japan. She translated Montgomery's posthumous collection of short stories *Akin to Anne: Tales of Other Orphans* in 1988–89. Recent articles include "Japanese Readings of *Anne of Green Gables*" (1999), "The Continuous Popularity of Red-Haired Anne in Japan" (2013), and "During and After the World Wars: L.M. Montgomery and the Canadian Missionary Connection in Japan" (2015). The paper "The Awakening of Awe-Inspiring Girls: From a Viewpoint of the Japanese Novel, *Daiana from the Bookstore*" (2014) is to be included in a collection of essays on Montgomery and gender (editors Holly Pike and Laura Robinson, under review). She is on the editorial board for the *Journal of L.M. Montgomery Studies*.

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