Past, Present, and Visual Technology in The Story Girl and The Golden Road

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This paper argues that in *The Story Girl* and *The Golden Road* Montgomery and her narrator replicate Montgomery's journalling and scrapbooking practices to explore the opportunities created by the visual technology of writing. The narrator's accounts of performative storytelling and use of visual records recreate rather than describe past experiences.

L.M. Montgomery's *The Story Girl* and *The Golden Road* are outliers in her oeuvre, focusing on a group of young people rather than a single character, and not precisely fitting the expectations of her previous works, except in the setting. Montgomery describes *The Story Girl* in her journal as "an idyl of childhood on an old P.E. Island farm during one summer," considering it "the best piece of work I have yet done,"1 and when *The Golden Road* was published, she noted that "[s]ome readers and critics think [it] is the best since *Anne*."2 Montgomery calls *The Story Girl* "my own favourite among my books … the one whose characters and landscape seem to me most real,"3 perhaps feeling this way because the novel incorporates her own family and local history and the storytelling practices of her time and place. The dedication of *The Golden Road* identifies Aunt Mary Lawson, Montgomery's great-aunt on the Macneill side, a woman with "fine storytelling abilities," as the source of many of the stories, and Montgomery was also accustomed to hearing her grandfather Macneill tell his finely honed tales of local and family history. Montgomery herself was a noted reciter at local events and a teller of "yarns" about PEI life.4 Connecting Montgomery's own experience with that of a fictional character,

Elizabeth Epperly writes of Montgomery's choice in the *Emily* books to "engage the energy of seeing and feeling rather than just to describe what was seen or felt" to depict "how an artist can experience and reconcile at least two seemingly conflicting forms of lived time: that is, the time of heightened perception beyond conventions and boundaries and the time of involuntary physical and emotional reflexes concerning daily conditions and events."[5] In the narrative structure of *The Story Girl* and *The Golden Road*, completed ten years prior to *Emily of New Moon* and begun while Montgomery still lived in PEI, Montgomery focuses on a different aspect of her characters' experience of time: rather than dealing with "conflicting forms of lived time," Montgomery recreates the lived moment of recollection. Both novels are narrated by Bev King, one of the group of cousins at the centre of the story. In the account of Bev's time in Carlisle, Montgomery links experiences of the past with the present moment in which they are recalled, merging past and present so that her narrator re-experiences rather than remembers the past, providing for the reader a vivid sense of recollection in action.[6]

The sources of Bev's recollections in the novel are both oral and visual. While Sara Stanley's storytelling helps to keep the oral traditions of her family and the community alive, a function that Montgomery also performs both in her journal and in these novels, the young characters' interactions with visual technologies—writing, print, and photography—shape both their approach to understanding the world outside their family and rural community as adolescents and the record in which Montgomery makes the experience of their past real in the present. As Walter J. Ong argues in *Orality and Literacy*, there are differences in how thought can be recollected and transmitted in oral cultures as opposed to literate cultures. He explores "the relations of orality and literacy and the implications of the relations" and their different effects on "human consciousness," claiming,

In the total absence of any writing, there is nothing outside the thinker, no text, to enable him or her to produce the same line of thought again or even to verify whether he or she has done so or not. … In a primary oral culture, to solve effectively the problem of retaining and retrieving carefully articulated thought, you have to do your thinking in mnemonic patterns, shaped for ready oral recurrence.

History, storytelling, and poetry in oral cultures, therefore, rely on repetition of structures and formulas. Ong reminds us, importantly, that "writing (and especially alphabetic writing) is a technology, calling for the use of tools and other equipment: styli or brushes or pens, carefully prepared surfaces such as paper, animal skins,

strips of wood, as well as inks or paints, and much more" and that it is specifically a visual technology, that "tyrannically locks [words] into a visual field forever." This permanence also makes writing a "time-obviating technology"[7] creating the possibility of gaps in access, unlike oral traditions which must be kept current by repetition from speaker to live audience. The desire to "obviate" time is central to Montgomery's aim in *The Story Girl* and *The Golden Road* to express the experience of recollection, and she and her characters employ both the devices of oral culture and those of literate culture to bypass temporal strictures.

The title of *The Story Girl* suggests that Sara Stanley's storytelling will be the focus of the novel. Joyce Coldwell's reading supports this view, as she argues that "Montgomery is not using the artistic devices of fiction to establish a setting for the narratives told by Sara Stanley. She is utilizing a story-teller audience pattern, which she knows well."[8] However, both Bev's accounts of Sara's storytelling and the structure of his narrative over the two books, which emphasize the oral and literate methods available for bringing geographically or temporally remote events near, suggest that Montgomery is concerned with the function of the stories as much as with the stories themselves. Jennifer Litster recognizes that Montgomery is not simply telling stories when she argues that Sara Stanley's "flair for storytelling bridges the gap between the mundane present and the hallowed past."[9] Epperly also references Montgomery's desire to bring the past and present together through stories, noting that "Montgomery's favourite stories and poems belonged to other, apparently more romantic times"; Epperly links Montgomery's desire to connect to the past with her interest in photography, which "gave every household a way to stop time and to seem to hold it as an artefact that could be visited."[10] By embedding Sara's performative storytelling within Bev's written narrative, Montgomery makes the remote times or places of Sara's stories transiently visible in the present of the novel, thereby creating effects similar to those of the magic-lantern show given by an "itinerant lecturer" that the young people are excited about attending.[11] The opportunity to see "views" of other places and hear "witty" stories about them is eagerly embraced by the children because of the novelty of the technology—"there had never been such a thing in Carlisle before."[12] However, both Epperly and Elizabeth Waterston draw attention to how little Sara Stanley's storytelling features in *The Golden Road*, Epperly noting that "in *The Golden Road* we hear Bev remembering."[13] This change in Bev's narrative between the two books privileges his voice over the Story Girl's, but more significantly it privileges the visual technology of print over oral storytelling. Readers do not "hear" Bev's or

Sara's voices as much as they see what Bev compiles.

One of the means by which Bev's narrative complicates the experience of what is past and what is present is the occasional placement of his adult narrator back in the moment he recounts. Ong claims that, "[i]n our typographic and electronic culture, we find ourselves today delighted by exact correspondence between the linear order of elements in discourse and the referential order, the chronological order in the world to which the discourse refers. When today narrative abandons or distorts this parallelism … the effect is clearly self-conscious."14 While Montgomery rarely disrupts the chronological order of the events experienced by the children in Carlisle, by regularly interrupting that progress with Sara's stories and Bev's references to his present, she is certainly "self-conscious," creating an effect beyond either storytelling or chronology. Rather than using storytelling as a device merely to link favourite stories of the past, over the two-book series Montgomery deliberately deploys the interaction of live performance and visual technologies to represent the complexity of how we understand our experiences prospectively, retrospectively, and in the moment and to make those experiences permanently accessible. While in *The Story Girl* Montgomery captures the ephemeral effects of storytelling through Bev's accounts, in *The Golden Road* she establishes the primacy of writing and print as methods of sharing and preserving experience and accessing the past.

Storytelling and Performance—Place and Time

Bev's—and therefore Montgomery's—concern with bringing the past and present into one moment is indicated in the opening sentences of *The Story Girl*. The narrative begins with a speech that Bev considers characteristic of Sara Stanley: "I do like a road, because you can be always wondering what is at the end of it." While the sentence is written in the present tense, Bev immediately places its utterance in a remote or mythical past by saying that "The Story Girl said that once upon a time," referencing the traditional opening of a fairy tale. However, he then shifts the utterance to the future by adding that "Felix and I, on the May morning when we left Toronto for Prince Edward Island, had not then heard her say it."15 Thus, in the present in which Bev writes, he reflects the complexity of merging experience, recollection, and knowledge and disrupts "the strict linear presentation of events in temporal sequence" that Ong associates with literate cultures.16 Bev further asserts a continuity and co-existence of past and present when he and Felix hear the frogs during their first night in Carlisle and Felix wonders if they are the same frogs their

father heard as a boy. When Bev expresses doubt as to frogs living that long, Felix asserts, “Well, they’re descendants of the frogs he heard … and they’re singing in the same swamp. That’s near enough.”17 Bev makes the same kind of assumption when he encounters the cat, Paddy, for the first time and wonders if he is the Topsy his father spoke of. Bev and Felix seem to expect that in coming to their father’s childhood home, they are coming to his childhood. Sara’s assurance that Paddy is “Topsy’s great-great-great-great-grandson” provides the same sense of temporal coexistence expressed in Felix’s remark about the frogs and suggests that one way the past remains present is through spatial continuity. As Sara identifies people and places for Bev and Felix in Chapter 2, she reminds them of how contingent the present is by saying “I can’t feel too thankful that Grandfather and Grandmother King happened to marry each other, when there were so many other people they might have married.” Bev thinks of the “terrible risk we had run years before we, or our parents either, had existed,”18 an understanding of temporal sequence that emphasizes the dependence of the present on the past and reinforces the need to maintain the past to understand and appreciate the present. Sara’s stories maintain that connection to the past, but because they rely on oral communication, they are just as contingent as the present itself, unlike Bev’s visual record.

The stories of local origin that Sara tells are therefore significant not only for their entertainment value, but also as a way of preserving and disseminating local history. The stories about Rev. Mr. Scott, for instance, date to the days of the children’s grandfather, while the story of the woman who would not speak to her husband for five years after a quarrel about an apple tree is about “Mrs. Richard Cook’s grandmother,” and these stories recount a specifically local past that could easily be lost. Sara specifies that she “heard Uncle Edward telling ever so many stories” about Rev. Mr. Scott,19 indicating that the community relies on oral tradition to keep stories available and that Sara learns the stories in the manner of oral cultures as described by Ong, by “listening” and “repeating.”20 The identification of the apple-tree story with the history of a current member of the community works like the boys’ conception of the frogs and Paddy as being linked to the past in a direct line. The historical context Sara provides establishes the current relevance of the stories. The family stories Sara tells are given similar relevance both through the connection to relatives and through location. Two of the family stories, “The Family Ghost” and “The Poet Who Was Kissed,” are described as “stories about the orchard,” which is where the children are sitting when the stories are told. She further connects the past and present through identification of relationships and similarities as well as

through gestures. For example, Bev's account of her telling of "The Poet Who Was Kissed" indicates that she uses actions, saying that Edith "tiptoed up—so—and bent over—so," adding for Bev and Felix's information that the children "sometimes act the story out." In telling of the Family Ghost, she links past and present and storyteller and audience by pointing to Cecily to identify a family resemblance and using gestures: "She had soft brown eyes that were too timid to look straight at anybody—like Cecily's there … and she had a tiny birthmark like a pink butterfly on one cheek—right here."21

From the beginning of *The Story Girl*, Bev recounts Sara Stanley's ability to create pictures through her words. On Bev and Felix's first morning in Carlisle, when Sara describes Aunt Olivia as "just like a pansy—all velvety and purply and goldy," Bev says that "Felix and I saw, somewhere inside of our heads, a velvet and purple and gold pansy-woman, just as the Story Girl spoke." Bev's account suggests that Sara's "wonderful voice" is instrumental to the effect created, that the words alone do not create the full effect. Bev more explicitly refers to the importance of the performative aspects of Sara's stories when he records her telling the story of the Sherman girls in Chapter 7: "I have written down the bare words of the story, as she told it; but I can never reproduce the charm and colour and spirit she infused into it. It *lived* for us. Donald and Neil, Nancy and Betty, were there in that room with us. We saw the flashes of expression on their faces, we heard their voices, angry or tender, mocking or merry, in Lowland and Highland accent." The importance of Sara's vocal delivery of the material is reinforced when Mr. Campbell, immediately after hearing the story, asks her to recite the multiplication table, and Bev again describes the effect her voice creates: "As she announced it, the fact that three times three was nine was exquisitely ridiculous, five times six almost brought the tears to our eyes, eight times seven was the most tragic and frightful thing ever heard of, and twelve times twelve rang like a trumpet call to victory."22 Sara's ability to create emotion through the multiplication table separates the power of her delivery from the content of the stories she tells. Bev's account of the power of Sara's expression thus reveals a limitation of live story-telling—the ephemerality of its visual and aural effects.

The need to be with the oral storyteller to experience transport to another time or place is also asserted in "How Kissing Was Discovered." At the end of the story, Bev describes how they had "come to [them]selves and discovered that [they] were really sitting in a dewy Prince Edward Island orchard instead of watching two lovers

on a mountain in Thessaly in the Golden Age." As in the story of the Sherman sisters, Sara's audience has had the experience of witnessing another time and place not through technology but through performance. Sara's power is demonstrated most clearly in her telling of the Serpent Woman in Chapter 23 of *The Story Girl*. In this instance the adults of the family are listening as well, and Bev describes Sara as becoming the character she describes: "She had put on a new personality like a garment, and that personality was a venomous, loathly thing … The light in her narrowed orbs was the cold, merciless gleam of the serpent's eye. I felt frightened of this unholy creature who had suddenly come in our dear Story Girl's place." Bev notes that this feeling is shared by the adults, who "[laugh], rather shakily" when Aunt Janet remarks on the unsuitability of the tale. Uncle Roger confirms Sara's power when he says, "If a girl of fourteen can make a couple of practical farmers and a pair of matter-of-fact housewives half believe for ten minutes that she is really a snake, what won't she be able to do when she is thirty?" Uncle Roger also confirms that Sara's effectiveness is performative; he expects her to become "the foremost actress of her day."[23]

Sara's storytelling has the power to evoke strong responses in her audience, but the effects are necessarily transient. The charm of Sara's stories does not rely on novelty, for as Bev writes, the Sherman sisters' tale "was old to us," and Cecily, "who had heard it many times before, listened just as eagerly as we did" to the ghost story. This repetition of stories as performances generates pleasure for the audience, while also instilling in them the details of family and local history. Sara has, in fact, learned the story of the Sherman girls from a print version in Aunt Olivia's scrapbook,[24] so her storytelling may be seen as primarily for pleasure rather than for retention and transmission of history, yet the response of her audience foregrounds the possibility of creating an experience of physically or temporally remote or fictional events.

Visual Format

In *The Golden Road* another type of narrative performance for pleasure is enacted in the chapter "Great-Aunt Eliza's Visit," when Cecily undertakes to entertain the Governor's wife, whom they mistakenly believe to be their great-aunt, by showing the family photo album. Margaret Linley and Colette Colligan note that late-nineteenth-century photo albums "were pictorial narratives of family relationships that relied on photography's unique indexical qualities to imagine and lay out new

dynastic histories and futures."[25] To the children, the album is a visual technology available for entertainment and informational purposes, and they assume that showing a visitor images of people who are family connections to produce and share understanding of relationships requires no further justification. Cecily's identifications frequently refer to the absence through time or location of the person pictured, such as the boy who "used to be hired with Uncle Roger," the nephew "who lives out west," Miss Stanley "who used to teach in Carlisle," and Mr. Layton "who used to travel around selling Bibles."[26] The photographs, shown to someone whose connection to them is not the connection the commentator assumes, specifically enact what Linley and Colligan describe as "uproot[ing] the eye from traditional networks of referentiality" and creating "recombinations of time, space, memory, and meaning."[27] Epperly suggests that Montgomery's own photographs in her journals and displayed throughout her home serve "as anchors for her yearning backwards in time" and allow "the freezing of time."[28] In the novel, these photographs of people known or unknown make a remote or past moment available to the present. As Cecily identifies the subjects of the photos, Dan begins to comment on her explanations, much in the "witty" manner of the lecturer commenting on the slides in the magic-lantern show. This episode is presented on the page in the manner of a performance script, with Cecily's and Dan's names at the margin, in italics, and stage directions and asides included:

Cecily, imploringly:—"(Dan, do stop. You make me so nervous I don't know what I'm doing.) This is Mr. Lemuel Goodridge. He is a minister."

Dan:—"You ought to see his mouth. Uncle Roger says the drawing string has fell out of it. It just hangs loose—so fashion."

Dan, whose own mouth was far from being beautiful, here gave an imitation of the Rev. Lemuel's, to the utter undoing of Peter, Felix, and myself.[29]

The visual form of this narration encourages the reader to conceptualize the scene as if performed in the moment for an audience rather than as an account of the past.

The logic of the commentary follows Cecily's movement from image to image in the photograph album, but the photographs themselves are not described. Those visual artifacts are instead the subject of commentary and explanation within the narrative and referenced through a separate visual effect for the reader's entertainment.

Montgomery's choice of this narrative style creates a sense of the vividness of Bev's recollection and replicates for the reader Bev's past position as a spectator. This sense is reinforced in his account of his reactions as he watches the scene play out and attempts to interpret their visitor's behaviour in real time; he notes a "twinkle in her eye" and a "twinkly" smile that are incompatible with his concept of their great-aunt and that "her eyes had a suspicious appearance" of laughing at them. Bev as narrator invites readers to share his suspicions at the points in the episode at which he experiences them and confirms those suspicions in the same way they are confirmed for him, through the subsequent discussion with the adults and the letter from Mrs. Lesley that Cecily receives the next day, which Bev incorporates into his text. While having presented the episode as if it is occurring in real time, at the end of the chapter Bev emphasizes that the account is retrospective by noting that "never, never did the Governor's wife get the recipe for those rusks,"30 the repetition of "never" indicating a long-finished past.

Print and Authority

While the power of visual technology to bring the past and present together is important, in the children's minds print has authority as well as the function of linking and sharing. The episodes of the judgment Sunday and the picture of God in particular illustrate the children's sense of the power of visual reproduction of information. When a schoolmate tells Felix that he has a book containing a picture of God, the children combine their money in order to buy the picture, which is to be torn from the book for them, and they plan to keep it in the family Bible as a sign of the reverence in which they hold it. On actually seeing the picture, the children are horrified by the depiction of God as a "stern, angrily-frowning old man with … tossing hair and beard." When the Story Girl arrives and dismisses the print as "nothing but the picture of a cross old man," the others want to believe her, but as Dan points out, "It says under the picture 'God in the Garden of Eden.' It's *printed*." Sara's argument that no one knows what God looks like is not sufficient to reassure the children, so they appoint Felix to consult the minister, who also dismisses the picture as "that thing." Bev expresses relief, as he recognizes that an authoritative reproduction cannot be categorized as a thing: "*Thing!* We began to breathe easier." While the children are reassured, Bev afterwards points out that their knowledge that God is not as depicted in the woodcut does not diminish the ongoing power of the visual representation: "From that day to this the thought or the mention of God brings up before us involuntarily the vision of a stern, angry, old man."31 Having

been presented with the printed visual information, however false, they can never entirely eradicate it. Their acceptance of the authority of print also influences their belief that the judgment day is at hand. As Bev recalls their first seeing the prediction in the newspaper, he accounts for their “real horror of fear” by their trust in adults and “a rooted conviction that whatever you read in a newspaper must be true.” While Cecily argues based on the Bible that no one can know when the judgment day is coming, Dan counters that the fact that the paper is printed gives it authority similar to that of the Bible. When Cecily asserts her choice to believe the Bible, Dan points out that “the Bible was written thousands of years ago, and that paper was printed this very morning. There’s been time to find out ever so much more,”32 giving the newspaper perhaps more credence as reflecting the most recent developments in knowledge.

Although Sara’s storytelling, like the magic-lantern show and Dan’s commentary on the photograph album, is performative and individual, the content of her stories is not generally of her own composition, and Bev frequently notes that the source of her material is printed matter. “How Kissing Was Discovered,” for instance, is a story from Aunt Olivia’s scrapbook, presumably cut from a printed source, since Sara gives it the formal title when she offers to tell it.33 The story of the Sherman girls, Bev points out, is a story of Mr. Campbell’s own great-grandmother, but its transmission to Sara, as noted earlier, is visual rather than oral: it has been recorded in the relatively ephemeral print of the newspaper and then preserved for repeated personal perusal through the further visual compilation of the scrapbook, one of Montgomery’s own methods for keeping the past accessible.34 Some stories Sara has collected by word of mouth, such as the story of Mrs. Dunbar and the captain of the *Fanny*, which Aunt Louisa in Charlottetown tells her, and the story of the Yankee Storm, an actual historical event about which Montgomery’s grandfather told stories, 35 which Sara learns from “Old Mr. Coles at the Harbour.”36 Sara thus adheres to the oral tradition in which, as Ong notes, “society regards highly those wise old men and women who specialize in conserving [knowledge], who know and can tell the stories of the days of old.”37 When Sara tells the story of the Yankee Storm, it is not one of the instances for which Bev describes the effect she creates on her hearers. In fact, she does not dramatize the story at all, but recounts it at second hand, using “Mr. Coles says” several times as she relays the events. Although Miss Reade responds sympathetically and Cecily cries, the response seems to be to the events (shipwreck and loss of life) rather than to the telling. Sara includes an excerpt from the poem the local schoolmaster wrote about the events, which Mr. Coles “couldn’t

remember any more of."[38] Ong points out that "[i]n memorizing a written text, postponing its recitation generally weakens recall," which could explain why the events Mr. Coles experienced remain vivid while he cannot recall the poem.[39] Sara's story of Mr. Coles's experience of the storm, affecting as her listeners find it, is a partial record because the poetic response that was included in Mr. Coles's youthful knowledge cannot be preserved in Sara's version of the story. Similarly, when Jasper Dale reads a story of his family history to Sara from his brown book, she notes when she tells the story to the others that she cannot include "all his nice poetical touches" because even though he read the story to her twice, she is unable to remember everything.[40] Without his visual record to consult, she cannot memorize all the details.

Sara's desire to include "all his nice poetical touches" when recounting Jasper's story suggests a desire to be true to a particular version of a text, which is a literate approach to memorization, as Ong notes, unlike the oral culture's process in which "[t]he fixed materials in the bard's memory are a float of themes and formulas out of which all stories are variously built."[41] She therefore adapts the textual source, which is presented to her orally, rather than memorizing it, putting the story into her own words while trying to be true to the events, dialogue, and emotions in the written version. She understands Jasper's text as authoritative and therefore feels she must acknowledge her deviation from it, unlike in a fully oral culture in which supposedly "verbatim renditions" are actually "recognizable versions of the same story."[42] Sara's version, interrupted by and incorporating responses to questions about politics and female propriety, cannot replicate its authoritative source but fulfills its function as entertainment and local history by presenting material in a familiar or traditional format: As Dan says, "I like that kind of story."[43]

Visual Technology and Recall

While Sara uses bodily performance to make characters and scenes of other times and places present to her audience, for Bev, the most immediate method of bringing the past into the present is the visual technology of writing. As the narrator (the supposed writer of the texts) whom Sara has predicted "will be a real newspaper editor some day,"[44] Bev is the character most concerned with the production and preservation of writing and print, having "a mania for preserving all documents relating to our life in Carlisle."[45] However, both of the instances in which the children produce writing of their own are instigated by the Story Girl, who also

understands the importance of visual records to preserve experience. It is Sara who suggests they all write down their dreams so they will "have them to read and laugh over when [they]'re old and gray" and who has the idea to produce a newspaper and to "keep the copies and when we become famous they'll be quite valuable."[46] Her sense is that writing provides permanency and that their present experiences are worth preserving for later access of either entertainment or monetary value.

Bev's narration of the dream book episode justifies Sara's belief that the visual record can revive the past. He begins the chapter in the narrative past tense—"the next day the Story Girl coaxed Uncle Roger to take her to Markdale"—but in the same paragraph switches to the present tense to say "[m]y own [dream book] lies open beside me as I write, its yellowed pages inscribed with the visions that haunted my childish slumbers on those nights of long ago." As he describes his experience in the present of looking at his dream book, he says that "the past comes very vividly back to me," that the others "are all around me once more": "I hear their laughing voices, I see their bright, unclouded eyes. In this little, old book … there is a spell of white magic that sets the years at naught. Beverley King is a boy once more." The detailed description of how each of his companions deals bodily with composition continues in the present tense for more than another page, until Uncle Roger passing by in Bev's recollected vision switches him back to narrating in the past tense. The presence of the dream book unifies past and present. Print or writing, as visual technology, literally places the past, what is already written and complete, in front of the reader and places the reader in the recorded moment, as Bev notes when he rereads the letters to Peter he had copied into the back of his dream book: "Hence I can reproduce them verbatim, with the bouquet they have retained through all the long years since they were penned in that autumnal orchard on the hill."[47]

Bev's insertion of *Our Magazine* into the visual record he is creating is also used to bring the past and present onto the same plane. Some of the contents of the magazine are presented in four chapters of *The Golden Road*, with titles and bylines included as if reproducing its original hand-printed form. The text of the magazine is interspersed with parenthetical comments lacking dialogue tags and active verbs that detail the reactions and comments of the listeners while the magazine is being read to the group: "*Cecily, soothingly*," "*Felicity, failing to see the Story Girl and Beverley exchanging winks*."[48] As in the visit of Aunt Eliza, the format takes the events out of a specific temporal relation to the narrative. The artifact of the

magazine is being read in the present in which Bev copies it into his account of his stay in Carlisle, in the present in which the reader of *The Golden Road* reads, and in the past in which the original writers of the material listen to Bev and Sara. Commenting on the reading of the first number, Bev refers to the magazine prospectively to note its effect during the year in his past that begins at the reading just described ("it continued to be capital fun for us throughout the year"), retrospectively to describe its effect in the period that intervenes between his year in Carlisle and the time at which he writes his account ("*Our Magazine* never made much of a stir in the world"), and in the moment of writing to affirm the permanence of the experience ("no wind can ever quench the ruddy glow of that faraway winter night in our memories").49 His narration of the reading using present participles prepares the reader for these comments. Rereading the magazine in his present, the text brings him to the past in which he previously read it so that he re-experiences it rather than remembers it.

Growing a Story

Visual technology that provides continuity between locations and times is particularly important in the development of the story of Jasper Dale. The Awkward Man is first mentioned in Chapter 2 of *The Story Girl*, when Sara tells Bev and Felix that she knows a story about him, but his story is not concluded until Chapter 25 of *The Golden Road*, where Bev inserts Sara's written account, "The Love Story of the Awkward Man," after Jasper's death.50 The first part of the story, which Sara tells in Chapter 6 of *The Story Girl*, is Mrs. Griggs's account of the daintily furnished locked room at Jasper's farm that contains some items of women's clothing as well as a "coloured photograph" of "a very pretty girl" and books with the name "Alice" written inside them. Further, Mrs. Griggs has seen Jasper writing poetry in a brown book, a detail that Sara finds intriguing. A narrative that links these pieces of information is lacking, however. Thus, in Chapter 12, after she returns from a walk with Miss Reade, Sara hints to the others that a story "is growing" that she will not be able to tell until "it's fully grown," and instead tells a story "the Awkward Man told us—told me—tonight." The reader can follow Bev's real-time accumulation of information that links Sara's accidental indication that Miss Reade also heard Jasper's story with Jasper's subsequent attendance at the school concert (Chapter 17) and with Miss Reade's new ring. Sara reiterates the incomplete nature of the story when refusing to speculate with Bev on the meaning of this ring.51 The information she and Bev are individually putting together could form a story, but

unlike the stories Sara learns from books, scrapbooks, or other tellers, it has not been given to her in a narrative form, and she cannot yet use it.

Sara is still unable to tell the story even when she has all the elements of it. In Chapter 24 of *The Golden Road*, when Sara reveals that Miss Reade is engaged to Jasper, she acknowledges that she has heard their individual accounts of their romance and that those accounts jointly explain the mystery of Golden Milestone recounted by Mrs. Griggs, but she tells the other children that she cannot tell them the story because "I'd spoil it if I told it—now." As she elaborates to Bev, "I've a feeling there's only one way to tell it—and I don't know the way yet. Some day I'll know it—and then I'll tell you, Bev."[52] Like the oral poets Ong discusses, she "needs time to let the story sink into [her] own store of themes and formulas, time to 'get with' the story,"[53] but she also has the literate person's sense that only one version can be authoritative. The story is included in Bev's narrative immediately following this conversation, but it is introduced in a way that draws attention to the lapse of time and to the need for visual technology to access the story: "Forty years later I wrote to her, across the leagues of land and sea that divided us, and told her that Jasper Dale was dead; and I reminded her of her old promise and asked its fulfilment. In reply she sent me the written love story of Jasper Dale and Alice Reade." Bev's account specifies both the spatial distance between him and Sara that necessitates a written reply and the lapse of time (more than forty years) that makes it possible to tell the story, both because Sara is now able to tell it in "just exactly the right way"[54] and because the principals are now dead, and the story can be regarded as local or family history, like the story of the Sherman girls. The implied sequence of Jasper's death forty years after the wedding, followed by Bev's receipt of the story from Sara, and the subsequent death of Alice before Bev's writing indicate just how far Bev is looking back in writing this account of his year in Carlisle. A literal-minded reader will notice that if the Yankee Storm that Sara tells of took place "nearly forty years ago, in October of 1851,"[55] Jasper's death "forty years later" than Bev's year in Carlisle is still seventeen years in the future when *The Golden Road* is published in 1913. When linked to Bev's "once upon a time" opening of *The Story Girl*, this seemingly impossible temporal situation emphasizes the fictionality of the narrative the reader is experiencing, but it also makes explicit the efficacy of visual technology for keeping the past in the present and available for the future.

Montgomery's Visual Records

In her journal, Montgomery links the composition of *The Story Girl* and *The Golden Road* to her personal desire to preserve and access the past of her family and community. Writing in her notebook on 23 May 1911, she gives an account of the extent to which incidents and characters in *The Story Girl* are based on the local history and inhabitants of Cavendish, incorporating local and family history into her personal visual record. The journal entry itself functions like the stories Sara Stanley learns and repeats, in that it is inserted from a separate source into a retrospective chronology. Montgomery wrote of events in a notebook[56] rather than in her actual journal during the period between her grandmother's death and becoming fully settled in Leaskdale after her wedding and honeymoon. She inserted these "stray entries" into a retrospective account dated 28 January 1912 that also includes a brief biography of her grandmother and a "short sketch" of people in Cavendish that she wants to memorialize.[57] This entry records that the story of the Sherman girls, preserved in a fictional newspaper and scrapbook in *The Story Girl*, is actually an "old family yarn of the Montgomery's [sic]" about the Penman girls, recounted by both her grandfather Macneill and George Montgomery[58] and that the story of the captain of the *Fanny* is also local history, though she has changed the names of the central figures.[59] In her journal account of the "real life" and "true" elements of *The Golden Road*, she again identifies and records community materials she used, including the complete poem that Mr. Coles cannot recall when telling Sara about the Yankee Storm, which Montgomery memorized as a child from a manuscript copy in a family scrapbook. Recalling the poem in her journal in 1913, she writes in the present tense, indicating the immediacy with which the poem brings the past before her: "I see the old burying ground … I see the old kitchen at home." The poem triggers visual images associated with its contents (the graveyard in which the sailors were buried) and its performance (her grandfather reciting it to his friends), placing her simultaneously in two distinct times and places. She claims in her journal that she has preserved the poem by including some verses in *The Golden Road*, though she also acknowledges they might have been printed in newspapers at the time. Like Bev and Sara, she assumes that print grants permanency and implies that her role as an author is to ensure ongoing access to her community's past through that visual technology.[60]

While Montgomery specifically identifies local stories used in *The Story Girl* and *The Golden Road*,[61] the books also contain materials that Montgomery culled from other sources: Peter's story of "The Locket That Was Baked" is a version of one of Montgomery's own stories for children,[62] Cecily's adventure with the umbrella is

expanded from a clipping in one of Montgomery's scrapbooks,[63] "The Battle of the Partridge Eggs" was actually written by her childhood friend Wellington Nelson,[64] and the "Love Story of the Awkward Man" is a version of her own short story "Paul, Shy Man."[65] Her reconfiguring of these disparate elements, like her entering of oral history into the visual record of both her journal and her published work, consciously links other times, places, and visual records to create or recreate experiences in a new visual record. When Montgomery began composition of *The Story Girl* in 1909, she wrote in her journal that "it seems to me I could never write it as it should be written anywhere else."[66] Like Sara, who must find the single authoritative way to tell the story of the Awkward Man, Montgomery makes the literate's assumption that there is a single right way to produce an original work; as well, like Sara telling stories about the orchard in the orchard, Montgomery wants to tell stories about her home community while in that community. Mary Rubio points out that Montgomery made changes in her journal during the period in which she copied it,[67] so it is possible that this comment was added during copying, but whether contemporary or added later, this assertion and the structure and content of the journal entries above indicate that Montgomery associated the composition of *The Story Girl* and *The Golden Road* with her private endeavours to capture and preserve the past visually in her journals and scrapbooks.

Conclusion

While Bev and Montgomery share the project of using the visual technologies of writing and print to preserve the past, they also frame their accounts to recreate moments in which they experience memories and interact with visual records or stories and events. Montgomery's structuring of Bev's account of his childhood year in Carlisle does not build a climactic plot but replicates or recounts individual events and Bev's understanding of those events as they occurred. As visual records, the accounts Bev supposedly writes share experience rather than "just … describe what was seen or felt," as Epperly says of the *Emily* books.[68] These moments collapse temporal and spatial distance so that the past is experienced rather than recalled in the present. Over the course of the two books, Montgomery uses Bev to explore and exploit her options as a writer for making experiences as real to the reader as they are to the writer. Bev's remembering and recreating the experiences of childhood show both how much the children's experiences are shaped by visual experiences and technologies and how the "white magic"[69] of writing keeps aspects of the past accessible for experience.

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Banner Image: Display at Green Gables Heritage Place, Cavendish, Prince Edward Island. Photo by Holly Pike, 2018.

- 1 Montgomery, *CJ* 2 (29 Nov. 1910): 316.
- 2 Montgomery, *CJ* 3 (6 Aug. 1913): 200.
- 3 Montgomery, *AP* 78.
- 4 Rubio, *Lucy Maud Montgomery*, 88, 38–39, 65–66. See Epperly, *Imagining Anne*, 14–15, 27, 55 for scrapbook clippings referencing Montgomery's recitations.
- 5 Epperly, "Reading Time" np.
- 6 Trinna S. Frever has presented on oral storytelling in Montgomery's work on several occasions, including "Recollection and Remembrance: Montgomery's Structural Retellings and Active Nostalgia" and "Story, Identity, Cultural Memory: Oral Storytelling in the Literature Classroom" (a workshop) at *L.M. Montgomery and Cultural Memory*, June 2012; "Emergent Words: Exploring the Interconnectedness of Language and Landscape" at *L.M. Montgomery's Interior and Exterior Landscapes*, June 2004, and "Going to Print: The Lore of Language in *Little Women* and *The Golden Road*" at the International Children's Literature Association Conference, June 1995. See also "Anne Shirley, Storyteller: Orality and *Anne of Green Gables*." *Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en littérature canadienne* 30, no. 2 (2005): 115–41. In "Recollection and Remembrance" she develops the concept of "active nostalgia" to explain Bev's collecting of oral and written sources in a process that she argues creates identity and supports cultural survival both within the novel and in the real world, a reading focusing on storytelling processes and the stories themselves, rather than, as here, the technology through which Bev presents stories.
- 7 Ong, *Orality* 2, 1, 34, 81–82, 12, 40.

- 8 Coldwell, “Folklore as Fiction” 127. For another discussion of Montgomery’s use of oral storytelling, see Frever, “Anne Shirley, Storyteller.”
- 9 Litster, “The Golden Road” 314.
- 10 Epperly, *Through Lover’s Lane* 23.
- 11 Reference to the famous “Yankee Storm” of 1851 that occurred “nearly forty years ago” indicates that *The Golden Road* is set around 1890, in what visual culture historian Joe Kember calls the “‘golden age’ of the [magic] lantern between 1880 and 1910, at which point it may legitimately be said to have possessed the characteristics of a fully mass medium, still working across a wide variety of radically different contexts” (Kember, “Introduction” 6). The late nineteenth-century magic-lantern show often provided “glorious scenes for the enjoyment and edification of the stay-at-home public,” opening “whole new worlds to audiences that had no other way of learning about them” (Wells, “The Magic of Faraway Places” 4).
- 12 Montgomery, *SG* 104, 109.
- 13 Epperly, *Fragrance* 232–34; Waterston, *Magic Island* 62.
- 14 Ong 147.
- 15 Montgomery, *SG* 1
- 16 Ong 147.
- 17 In “Emergent Words: The Interconnectedness of Language and Landscape in the works of L.M. Montgomery” (*CREArTA* vol. 5 (2005), pp. 52-62) Trinna S. Frever argues that this passage reveals how “features in the landscape inspire storytelling” (58), and that Sara’s telling of ‘The Tale of the Family Ghost’ and ‘The Poet Who Was Kissed’ in the orchard shows “not only the potential of nature to embody storiedness, but also the ability of the orchard to transcend worldly, human time, and to live in the mythic place of story itself” (59). My interest here is in Bev’s understanding of temporal contingency and the visual aspects of the storytelling that he recounts.
- 18 Montgomery, *SG* 9, 18, 19.
- 19 Montgomery, *SG* 144–45, 228, 143. Montgomery identifies a source for Rev. Mr. Scott in a Rev. Mr. Sprott, about whom her grandfather told many stories (*CJ* 2 [23 May 1911]: 405).
- 20 Ong 9.
- 21 Montgomery, *SG* 20–21, 30, 27.
- 22 Montgomery, *SG* 16, 20–1, 79, 80.
- 23 Montgomery, *SG* 189, 252, 253.

- 24 Montgomery, *SG* 79, 26–27, 79. Montgomery, *SG* 79, 26–27, 79. In “Recollection and Remembrance,” a 2012 conference presentation, Trinna S. Frever argued that aspects of *The Story Girl*, the telling of the Betty Sherman story in particular, demonstrate the process of development of cultural memory through the movement of story back and forth through oral and print forms and by the passage of gossip into history as generations pass and stories are retold, depicting the process of memory creation through acts of recollection.
- 25 Linley and Colligan, “Introduction” 7.
- 26 Montgomery, *GR* 76–77.
- 27 Linley and Colligan 6.
- 28 Epperly, *Through Lover’s Lane* 61.
- 29 Montgomery, *GR* 78. Italics in original.
- 30 Montgomery, *GR* 71, 75, 83, 89.
- 31 Montgomery, *SG* 83–84, 86, 87, 88, 89. Italics in original.
- 32 Montgomery, *SG* 200, 201, 202.
- 33 Montgomery, *SG* 185. Montgomery based this story on “When Kissing Came into the World” by C. Lauron Hooper, which she had pasted into her own scrapbook (Epperly, *Imagining Anne* 40–41). Montgomery included a version of the story in her “Around the Table” column for the Halifax *Echo* on 31 March 1902 (*A Name for Herself* 165–67). Hooper’s story was published in *The Ladies’ Home Journal*, vol. 10, no. 9 (Aug. 1893), p. 6.
- 34 For an account and representative pages of Montgomery’s scrapbooks, see Epperly, *Imagining Anne*. Epperly notes that Montgomery’s six personal scrapbooks are “filled with souvenirs, her own and other people’s photographs, postcards, cats’ fur, swatches of fabric, magazine pictures, and pressed flowers” (3).
- 35 See for instance *CJ* 6 (26 July 1927): 154–65. For an interesting account of the development of stories about the Yankee Storm, see MacDonald, “The Yankee Gale.”
- 36 Montgomery, *SG* 91; *GR* 254.
- 37 Ong 41.
- 38 Montgomery, *GR* 257–58, 256.
- 39 Ong 60.
- 40 Montgomery *GR*, 10.
- 41 Ong 60.
- 42 Ong 61.
- 43 Montgomery, *GR* 21.

- 44 Montgomery, *GR* 346.
- 45 Montgomery, *SG* 331.
- 46 Montgomery, *SG* 231; *GR* 2–3, 4.
- 47 Montgomery, *SG* 232, 233, 331.
- 48 Montgomery *GR* Chapters V, IX, XX, XXXI; 66. Italics in original.
- 49 Montgomery *GR* 54, 66.
- 50 Montgomery, *SG* 20; *GR* 281, Chapter XXV.
- 51 Montgomery, *SG* 65–67, 155, 254.
- 52 Montgomery, *GR* 275, 280.
- 53 Ong 60.
- 54 Montgomery, *GR* 281, 275.
- 55 Montgomery, *GR* 254.
- 56 Montgomery used this method during periods of travel and stress. See for instance *CJ* 4 (1 Sept. 1919): 160–78, recounting Ewan's illness in Boston and *SJ* 4 (16 Sept. 1936): 237ff, which begins a series of retrospective entries and commentary documenting the period leading up to the Macdonalds' move from Norval to Toronto continuing into *SJ* 5.
- 57 Montgomery, *CJ* 2 (12 Jan. 1912): 397, 372–74, 378–94.
- 58 Montgomery, *CJ* 2 (23 May 1911): 405. Montgomery also mentions this tale in *The Alpine Path* (12–13) and published a longer version under the title "A Pioneer Wooing" in *Farm and Fireside* (15 Sept. 1903, pp. 14–15) and *Canadian Courier* (20 May 1911, pp. 8, 26–28) (Collins, *Annotated Bibliography*, p. 370, item 753). She includes a briefer version in a 5 June 1905 letter to G.B. MacMillan (*My Dear Mr. M* 9–11).
- 59 Montgomery, *CJ* 2 (23 May 1911): 405.
- 60 Montgomery, *CJ* 3 (6 Aug. 1913): 130, 132–33, 133–34, 134.
- 61 The dedication of *The Golden Road* identifies Aunt Mary Lawson, Montgomery's great-aunt on the Macneill side, as the source of many of the stories.
- 62 Montgomery, *GR* 227–29; "The Locket That Was Baked," *Congregationalist*, 7 Mar. 1908, p. 318; *Christian Advocate*, 22 May 1908, p. 650–51. (Collins, p. 382, item 947).
- 63 Montgomery, *GR* 59–61; "Dreadful Encounter," Epperly, *Imagining Anne* 55.
- 64 Montgomery, *GR* 354–56; *CJ* 3 (6 Aug. 1913): 134.
- 65 "Paul, Shy Man" was published in *Housekeeper*, March 1907, pp. 5, 6, 39. Montgomery used the title "The Love Story of an Awkward Man" for a story published in the *Springfield Republican*, 25 June 1904, p.22, which has a central

character resembling Jasper Dale in some ways (Collins, p. 380, item 910 and p. 375, item 834).

- 66 Montgomery, *CJ* 2 (1 June 1909): 225.
- 67 Rubio, *Lucy Maud Montgomery* 272–80.
- 68 Epperly, “Reading Time” np.
- 69 Montgomery, *SG* 233.

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