Tending to Place: Home and Relationships in Jane of Lantern Hill

DOI
http://doi.org/10.32393/jlmms/2024.0026
Published on
Fri, 11/15/2024 - 12:00

This article takes up concepts of home, place, and identity in L.M. Montgomery's *Jane of Lantern Hill*. Drawing on Yi-Fu Tuan's theory of place and the concept of the girl's *Bildungsroman*, we argue that tending both to relationships and place itself is central to the creation of home(s) for Jane.

In *The Fragrance of Sweet-Grass,* Elizabeth Rollins Epperly writes that all of L.M. Montgomery's heroines exhibit a fierce love of home, often several homes. This love of home is echoed in other Montgomery scholarship, particularly that which has focused on the roles of place and nature.[1] In Montgomery's *Jane of Lantern Hill* (1937), hereafter *Jane,* there are two significant spaces: Toronto and Prince Edward Island (PEI). Toronto's urban elements and class expectations restrict Jane's ability to tend to the domestic, thus affecting her ability to turn this space into a meaningful place. In contrast, PEI offers a rural, loving environment where Jane thrives. In this article, we trace the narrative concepts of home and place, and argue that, through her tending to space and to relationships, Jane "grow[s] down" (Pratt 30) toward a domestic-centred, middle-class womanhood—which she desires. As Jane begins tending to space, Lantern Hill transforms into a particular kind of place: a home.

Space, Place, and Tending

The concept of home is a central motif in children's literature scholarship. Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer argue that the home-away-home narrative pattern is the most defining characteristic of children's literature (184). They suggest that the

promise of returning home to the safety of a mother figure, after the pleasure of an adventure elsewhere, acknowledges that home (including a mother) is assured, a guaranteed place to which to return. Acceptance of home results in the rejection of adventure, and vice versa. This pattern asserts a certain trajectory for the character, as Melissa Wilson and Kathy Short articulate: “growing up is conceptualized as moving from point A to point B in a regulated manner. Point A is fanciful, silly, emotional, and childish while point B is rational, serious, and, in the end, grown up” (132). We posit that these home-away-home narratives overly simplify the representation of an experience of home (a particular kind of place), which is often rooted in a single understanding of familial relations. Here, we argue that Jane’s identity trajectory is influenced by the contrasting experience of two spaces: Toronto (away) and PEI (home). By disrupting the typical home narrative, Jane’s story also upends traditional or stereotypical conceptions of family (including mother-daughter, father-daughter, and grandmother-granddaughter relationships). Even though Jane’s mother lives with her in Toronto, Jane’s experience with this space is one of unfamiliarity. For Nodelman and Reimer, home provides physical and emotional security, both of which can be represented by the mother figure. For our argument, this security is not sufficient to create a home; it is secondary to the ability to actively participate in homemaking through tending.

Thinking about characters’ relationships with space and place is one way of conceptualizing home and identity. Janet Grafton has argued with reference to space in *Jane* and Dorothy Canfield Fisher’s *Understood Betsy* that “[t]he details of country landscapes and farming communities … are unfamiliar to the young protagonists at the beginnings of their stories. Through close engagement with these environments, the girls journey towards a new understanding of themselves” (60). Here, we similarly argue that Jane’s interactions with place shape her identity. To demonstrate this, we draw on the work of geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, specifically his differentiation between space and place. Tuan notes that space and place “require each other for definition” (6) and posits that geographical locations are either spaces or places. Spaces are unfamiliar, while places are meaningful. Individuals must pause in locations to transition from space into place. Obtaining a sense of place with a location is a conscious experience, one that is only possible in a *place* and is the result of pausing in a place long enough. It would be impossible to achieve a sense of place in space. Similarly, here we posit that a home is an extension of place; a space can never be a home. In the context of *Jane,* Tuan’s concept of pausing seems too static. Because Jane actively tends to place, rather than Tuan’s

conceptualization of the person standing still, she tends to her relationships and to the environment itself—and, in doing so, her actions transform space into a place, and a place into a home.

Girls' *Bildungsroman* and Tending

The trajectory of the *Bildungsroman* helps us to trace Jane's transition toward eventual womanhood, with a keen eye to the role of home. In English-language, North American nineteenth- and early twentieth-century girls' literature, the girl's *Bildungsroman* often asks the heroine to, in Annis Pratt's terms, "grow[] down" (30) by sacrificing her individuality to join her community and fill a domestic role. This trajectory is in direct contrast to a boy's *Bildungsroman*, which often features the male character asserting his individuality by growing up and pursuing his goals (Sardella-Ayres and Reese 39). Importantly, the heroine seems to choose domesticity. Although contemporaneously there were real-life girls who chose education and careers instead of or in addition to marriage and motherhood, the girls' texts often "preserve a socially conservative view of acceptable female behavior" (Reese 9). Even when fictional heroines go to college or have careers, they are often eventually shown choosing marriage above all, such as in Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables.*[2] Because the heroine will eventually select a domestic life, the home can play a prominent role for her. For Jane, her choice of domesticity strongly aligns with her desires for homemaking (which is termed her "ruling passion" [36]), positioning her growing down as positive. As a result, Jane's domestic role echoes Pratt's observation that, "at its roots the bildungsroman is essentially a novel of selfhood rather than of social conformity" (Pratt 37). Jane's decision to choose tending is a fulfillment of her own desires.

Jane's identifications with home are ultimately tied to her developing relationships with her parental figures as well as her *Bildungsroman*. As Nodelman and Reimer suggest, the home-away-home narrative depends on a return to a loving mother figure. Lisa Rowe Fraustino and Karen Coats observe, "[the mother] plays many roles and many burdens: a place from which to launch and home to return to" (3). *Jane* disrupts what this ideal family looks like by substituting a caring father for a mother figure. As Diana Arlene Chlebek notes, "Montgomery's book probes the legacy of family tension" (145). The concept of tending is central to Jane's *Bildungsroman* because in growing up, the heroine "becomes a caretaker of others and a home, preparing her for marriage and motherhood" (Reese 7). For Jane, happy

relationships are dependent on her ability and willingness to tend to place, home, her father, and, eventually, her mother. Through tending, she is learning to join the middle class and offer care to others as part of her growing down, in Pratt's terms. Jane thrives as part of this community, leaving behind her individualistic identity to provide care.

Home Narratives in *Jane of Lantern Hill*

Away in Toronto

At the beginning of the novel, Jane lives in Toronto with her mother, maternal grandmother, and aunt in an austere mansion on Gay Street. While Nodelman and Reimer observe that home in children's literature typically offers physical and emotional security in addition to maternal love, for Jane, Gay Street is neither emotionally secure nor loving. Jane's mother loves her but does not actively tend to her. Jane's family life in Toronto follows a maternal tradition, in that she is being raised primarily by women, which is an oft-repeated trope for Montgomery novels, such as *Anne of Green Gables*, *Emily of New Moon*, and *The Blue Castle*. In *Jane*, the difference lies in the lack of nurture these maternal figures provide. Erika Rothwell observes, "even though surrounded by two mothers, Jane is as much without a positive maternal role model as Anne was before arriving at Green Gables" (141).

Instead of providing maternal love for Jane, Jane's mother, Robin, is "weak and helpless" (Rothwell 141). Jane's grandmother will not permit Robin to tend to Jane; instead, Robin almost has to hide her love. And yet, there are instances of shared love between Robin and Jane. For example, one morning Jane shares breakfast with Robin alone: "They had a lovely time, laughing and talking beautiful nonsense, very quietly, so as not to be overheard" (59). "[V]ery quietly" is indicative of keeping this display of affection from grandmother, and, ultimately, Robin defaults to her own mother's wishes. Jane's grandmother ensures that Jane's physiological needs are being met but reserves her own loving affection for Robin. Jane is aware of this difference:

> There were times Jane was afraid she did hate grandmother, which was dreadful, because grandmother was feeding and clothing and educating her. Jane knew she ought to love grandmother, but it seemed a very hard thing to do. Apparently mother found it easy; but, then, grandmother

> loved mother, which made a difference. Loved her as she loved nobody else in the world. And grandmother did not love Jane. Jane had always known that. (6)

This passage shows Jane's awareness of the family's complex dynamics. Jane feels that she should love Grandmother, but also acknowledges that Grandmother does not love her. Instead, the mother-daughter relationship at the heart of this family is that of Grandmother and Robin, overturning the typical child-parent relationship in children's literature (Nodelman and Reimer 197).

Jane longs to be closer to her mother. In particular, Jane "hate[s] the bedroom where she ha[s] to sleep alone":

> She wished she and mother could sleep together. They could have such lovely times talking to each other with no one else to hear, after they went to bed or early in the morning. And how lovely it would be when you woke up in the night to hear mother's soft breathing beside you and cuddle to her just a wee bit, carefully, so as not to disturb her. (57–58)

The language Jane uses to express her desire for her mother's affection and time is tentative. She would cuddle "a wee bit," "carefully," in an effort "not to disturb her." Her desire for love from her mother—at least love expressed in this manner—is forbidden by Grandmother, who believes such sleeping arrangements are "unhealthy" (58). Grandmother's reason, however, speaks primarily to her own jealousy of Robin's love, highlighting the contentious nature of their familial relationships.

Robin's limited access to Jane aligns with the imperfect type of mother in girls' literature. The one-dimensional mother in English-language American and Canadian girls' books from this period can be idealized or ineffective (Reese 30). The idealized mother aligns with someone like Marmee from Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868–1869). This mother is the heart of the house, someone who quietly guides her daughters through words and her own example toward becoming versions of an ideal woman (Reese 29). The ineffective mother, however, often has someone else running the household, while also failing to properly guide and care for her children (Reese 30). This mother figure reflects nineteenth-century fears about "motherhood gone awry," which texts explore by "imagining ways for girls to take care of other girls, the men and boys around them, and even mothers themselves" (Sanders 162).

Jane's mother is arguably emotionally absent, particularly at the beginning of the novel, and perhaps it is as a result of this absence that Jane longs to fulfill a domestic role. Chlebek observes that Robin is "a sweet, but ineffectual, mother who herself needs mothering" (149). Because Robin is an "ineffective mother," she in essence "creat[es] a gap in the household for [Jane] to fill" (Reese 30). Jane seeks to fill this gap through tending.

Tending, for Jane, is a way to turn a space into a place and eventually into a home. Elsewhere we map Anne Shirley's transition in PEI from space to place. Through an analysis using Tuan's space/place dichotomy, we argue that "when Anne arrives at Green Gables, it is a space, and it transforms into a place once familiar and loved" (Reese and Spring 1). Similarly, Jane longs to tend to space because she recognizes that being able to tend to, or offer care for, a space can help transform it into something loved—a place or home. One illustration of this awareness is her longing to participate in domestic tasks. Occasionally, the cook allows Jane to help make some of the simpler dishes, but in secret, as she knows Grandmother would not approve. Jane's thoughts about her room illustrate our argument about tending and place:

> Jane thought she might have liked [her] room better if it had been smaller … Nothing in it seemed to be related to her. It always seemed hostile, watchful, vindictive. And yet Jane always felt that if she were allowed to do things for it … sweep it, dust it, put flowers in it … she would begin to love it, huge as it was. (58; ellipses in original)

Jane wishes to make her bedroom a place through tending—sweeping, dusting, etc. Her use of the word "related" seems to indicate that love is necessary to make a space a home. For Jane, tending establishes a relationship both with people and spaces. "Hostile," "watchful," and "vindictive" are all words that might be used to describe Grandmother's behaviour toward Jane. Grandmother's presence prohibits Jane from making her mark on space by imposing her idea of what an upper-class home should be and how an upper-class girl should behave.

Furthermore, the initial description of the house on Gay Street illustrates that it is an imposing space, not a relatable place:

> Jane lived at 60 Gay. It was a huge, castellated structure of brick, with a pillared entrance porch, high, arched Georgian windows, and towers and turrets … It was surrounded by a high iron fence with wrought-iron gates … that were always closed and locked by Frank at night, thus giving Jane a very nasty feeling that she was a prisoner being locked in. (2)

Words like “brick,” “iron,” “fenced,” and “locked” reiterate that, in all its grandiosity, Gay Street’s fences and gates prevent her from tending to relationships with either space or people. The formality of the house restricts her from engaging with the manicured version of space she has access to. The book also describes her feeling of restriction when visiting Uncle William’s house: “[o]ne was almost terrified to walk over the lawn lest one do something to Uncle William’s cherished velvet. You had to keep to the flat stepping-stones path. And Jane wanted to run” (4–5). Grafton has similarly demonstrated that Jane is “denied primary experience in [her] urban environment” (107). We also observe that Jane’s boundaries prohibit her from venturing into the wider community: “[i]t was so seldom [Jane] was allowed to walk anywhere alone … to walk anywhere at all, indeed” (41; ellipsis in original). She has no freedom to explore or tend to place beyond the house, and her movement is governed by a set of rules enforced by her grandmother.

Roberta Trites notes that naming offers power over the object or person being named (31). The name Gay Street implies that it might be a happy or lively space, but the house is described as dead: exclusive, wealthy, but lifeless. This dissonance in naming is true for Jane as well, mirroring the restriction that Jane feels in her space. Her full name is Jane Victoria, after both her grandmothers. While Jane lives at Gay Street, Grandmother insists that she be called Victoria, emphasizing Jane’s connection to her maternal family and the regality and high status associated with Queen Victoria. Even though Jane wants to be called simply “Jane,” Robin compromises and calls her daughter “Jane Victoria,” as if to connect two families and two spaces that are currently not connected. Robin is caught in the middle. She cannot happily perform the upper-class womanhood Grandmother wants for her, as her heart is not in it, but she cannot be the mother Jane longs for, as Robin feels she must continuously attempt to please her own mother. While Jane is “away” in Toronto, she is called by a name that she does not identify with. It is not until she goes “home” to PEI that she is able to claim the name Jane for herself.

In Toronto, Jane longs to tend to her space and because she is forbidden, separated from these tasks by class expectations, she pretends to tend to or “polish” the moon. This act allows her to fulfill her desire to tend and make a space—even an inaccessible, uninhabitable space like the moon—a real place to her. In winter, when Jane is trapped indoors at Gay Street, tending to the moon becomes her refuge: “The moon was her only escape then and she slipped away to it oftener than ever, in long visitations of silence which grandmother called ‘sulks’” (39–40). Her movement to home, discussed below, is the result of tending to her space and claiming her name. She grows down into a plain-Jane, middle-class role, where she can participate in domestic tasks, leaving the upper-class, royal-esque Victoria behind. When she has a home to tend to, she no longer tends to the moon. Following in the tradition of other Montgomery heroines,[3] Jane takes her naming a step further and becomes Jane of Lantern Hill.

Tending to a New Home in PEI

Reimer observes that “the behavior of powerful adults” can be a catalyst for the child protagonist to leave their “originary home,” leaving the child with the option to either return home or “choose to claim the unfamiliar space as a new home” (“No Place” 1). Jane’s journey to PEI to meet her father is arranged by adults. At the beginning of the novel, Jane does not have a relationship with her father, whom she thinks is dead, or with his PEI home. Upon arrival, she observes, “So this was Prince Edward Island … this rain-drenched land where the trees cringed before the wind and the heavy clouds seemed almost to touch the fields” (74; ellipsis in original). It is clear that at this point Jane does not identify with the landscape. However, upon meeting her father, she immediately feels connected to him: “The next moment she was lifted in his arms and kissed. She kissed him back. She had no sense of strangerhood. She felt at once the call of that mysterious kinship of soul which has nothing to do with the relationships of flesh and blood” (83).

Even though PEI is still a space, the bond she feels with her father upon meeting him affirms that the Island will eventually become a place. In part, this potential exists because her father offers the parental love that Nodelman and Reimer (197) observe as central but associate with the mother. Her father immediately provides the physical affection that she longed for with her mother. The care Jane’s father shows her echoes the care Montgomery’s Matthew Cuthbert provides for Anne of Green Gables as a central parental figure (Reese and Spring 6). Jane’s father tends to her and also empowers her to enact the tending she longs to do, thus enabling her to

establish a home in PEI. Rather than, in Tuan's terms, "pausing," Jane is actively nurturing her place and people (cleaning her house, cooking meals for her father, and growing plants). When Jane tends to the house, she is also tending to her father; relationships and place become intertwined.

While fathers are often considered secondary to mothers in girls' literature (Foster and Simons 7), in American girls' literature, "the father is frequently regarded as a beloved, if not favored, figure in the heroine's life, thus holding a prominent place" (Reese 40).4 Heidi Lawrence notes the roles of parents in Montgomery's fiction "who can be relied on both to train their children and to love them wholeheartedly" (186). Jane's father follows in this tradition—once he is united with Jane, he takes an active and loving role in her upbringing in a way that her grandmother and mother have not: her grandmother is active (but not loving), and her mother loving (but not active). In contrast to Grandmother's assumption that Jane must accept the space that is allotted to her, Jane's father waits until she is with him so they can choose a house together. In this way, Jane and her father will find a space and begin the process of relating to it as a place of shared belonging. They agree that the house needs to have a sense of "magic." When they first hear of the house on Lantern Hill, the narrator notes, "Jane's thumbs pricked. Magic was in the offing … And then, right before them, was the house … *their* house!" (100; ellipses in original). Her physical response to the house (thumbs pricking) is part of the larger potential of turning this space into a place, the promise of connection to a home.

As Jane begins tending to the house and garden, Lantern Hill transforms into a home, changing it from a space into a meaningful place. This transition occurs primarily through Jane's ability and freedom to enact domesticity. In girls' literature, when mothers are unable or unwilling to fulfill the idealized maternal role, there is often an "othermother" present to provide the heroine with guidance (Reese 38). In Toronto, where Jane is not allowed to perform domestic tasks, there is no othermother for her, but in PEI, Jane's female neighbours take on this role by sharing recipes and garden cuttings, and teaching Jane the domestic skills she lacks. These women contrast with Jane's Aunt Irene, who is domestically skilled but serves a similar role on the Island to Grandmother in Toronto. Aunt Irene attempts to diminish Jane's tending, making patronizing comments about her cooking and housekeeping and telling Jane of Robin's ineffective attempts at these tasks. However, because of her obvious success at tending, Jane avoids repeating Robin's experience of diminishment due to her lack of domestic skills. While Jane's relationships in Toronto

are fixed and rigid, her relationships in PEI are much more reciprocal: she has people who teach her skills and a father who cares for and tends to her. In return, Jane tends to her father and home and helps and supports her neighbours.

After living in PEI for a short period, Jane reflects, “It was nice to live where you could show how capable you were” (115). This sense of capability expresses her role as the “woman of the house.” She helps choose the home; she decides what meals they will eat, what vegetables they will plant, how to decorate the home, and which rooms will be used for what purposes. In fact, Mollie Gillen observes that Jane’s freedom is in essence because of her father: “once [Jane] had discovered her charming father … [she] really escaped the tyranny of nagging adults” (173). For Jane, tending and domesticity provide her the freedom and the fulfillment she longed for when living in upper-class Toronto, where she could only assist the servants in secret. At Lantern Hill, she takes on domestic tasks with pleasure and freedom. Her happiness comes from being able to tend to her father and to the place, and she thus creates her own home instead of finding or returning to a home.

In addition to her tending to the domestic sphere at Lantern Hill, Jane experiences PEI as a place that is open and free in a way that contrasts with the restrictive space of Gay Street. Shelagh J. Squire writes about Montgomery’s juxtaposition of PEI and Toronto as “a utopian-dystopian polarity” (141). As Jane gets to know her father, PEI becomes a welcoming place: the poplars “shak[e] in green laughter. An apple tree stretch[es] out friendly arms” (60). Whereas in Toronto Jane longed to run but could not, in PEI there are “free hills and wide, open fields where you could run wherever you liked … spruce barrens and shadowy sand dunes, instead of an iron fence and locked gates” (112). This imagery explicitly contrasts Grandmother’s house, which is iron-clad, bricked, and urban. Lantern Hill operates at the crux of true freedom, being far away from the city: Jane’s gardens in PEI have a view of the unruly sea beyond the fence, as opposed to the well-manicured lawns of Gay Street.

This setting is indicative of Jane’s newfound agency. She is able to tend and to enact domestic skills in part because she has moved from the urban upper class to the rural middle class. She is no longer restricted by servants and the social expectations of her grandmother and schoolmates. Whereas a move “down” in class is often categorized as a negative, and upward mobility is typically seen as ideal, for Jane, access to tending—the key to her happiness and connection to place—is more available to her as a member of the middle class. Because Jane’s freedom to tend is tied to her identity as middle-class, her fulfillment of the girl’s *Bildungsroman*

expectation of “grow[ing] down” to societally determined expectations (Pratt 30) depends on her move *down* in class. Her happiness comes from replacing restrictive and unfulfilling upper-class expectations with those that meet her personal needs and desires.

Jane is aware of changes in her relationship to both people and place, noting that “the P.E. Islanders were nicer, or at least more neighbourly, than the Toronto people.” However, “she did not realize that the change was in herself. She was no longer rebuffed, frightened, awkward because she was frightened. Her foot was on her native heath and her name was Jane” (116). As noted above, Jane’s new self-assuredness comes from her experience of PEI as a place. Prior to her return, Jane is told, “Don’t look so woebegone, dear … Remember you’re going home” (193). Jane recognizes that home is not necessarily defined by the presence of a mother:

> Home! “Home is where the heart is.” Jane had heard or read that. And she knew she was leaving her heart on the Island with dad, to whom she presently said goodbye with all the anguish of all the good-byes that have ever been said in her voice. … And now to be Victoria again! (193)

In spending her summer tending to—that is, actively nurturing—Lantern Hill, Jane has turned that space into a place—ultimately, a home. Now Jane returns to her “away”—to Toronto—having developed more self-possession through her connection to the Island.

Away to Toronto

Upon arrival in Toronto, Jane is greeted by her mother, who asks if she is glad to be back, to which Jane carefully responds: “*So* glad to be with you again, mummy” (194; emphasis in original). It is notable that Jane emphasizes a return to her mother, rather than focusing on a return to Gay Street. After her time tending to her own identity and to her relationships (with her father, neighbours, and the physical environment) in PEI, Jane appears to be more aware of what constitutes a home. On the Island, she was allowed to run, clean, cook, and tend to a meaningful relationship with place. As a result, she takes the next step in her *Bildungsroman* journey, becoming competent in domesticity, as expected in girls’ stories.

Grandmother notes Jane’s newfound confidence, in that she “had somehow learned what to do with her arms and legs and was looking entirely too much mistress of

herself” (194). Her grandmother is acutely aware of these physical changes in Jane: “‘Victoria has gone quite P. E. Island,’ said grandmother with her bitter little smile, much as if she had said, ‘Victoria has gone quite savage’” (197). This statement illustrates the binaries (in race and class) that Grandmother believes inherently exist between these places. While Robin notes that Jane now has a “lovely tan” (194), the result of spending so much time outdoors on the Island, for Grandmother, this tan represents class or race-based differences. In Toronto, staying indoors and adhering to white, upper-class womanhood is the ideal—where servants (who are working-class and might not be white) tend to daily chores and spend time outside. Jane’s self-assuredness stems from her newfound capabilities of tending, skills that her grandmother inextricably links to lower-class women, as Grandmother feels it is unladylike for upper-class women to perform domestic tasks. Because Jane relies on tending to create a home, relationships, and identity—something she is unable to access with the upper-class restrictions of Gay Street—she thrives in the middle-class setting that Lantern Hill provides.

Gay Street will never be a home for Jane because the performance of upper-class womanhood does not permit her the freedom and agency that she has on the Island. Jane’s developing identity influences her relationship to Toronto: while she shows increased maturity and competence, she is no longer able to tend, to embody the domestic tasks central to her *Bildungsroman* that would give her the ability to turn Toronto into a meaningful place. Chlebek notes the ties between class and the prison-like atmosphere of Gay Street: “[Jane] is overwhelmed by a complex structure of dynastic and class rules that her grandmother enforces with the rigour of criminal law in regard to deportment, dress, table manners, friends, education, reading matter, and so on” (148). In Gay Street, Grandmother’s idea of womanhood is performance-based. This expectation is shown in Robin going out to parties almost every night, performing gaiety, only to come home to cry alone in her room. When Jane unthinkingly calls Lantern Hill her home, she regrets her honesty, as “she hated to hurt mother” (201). Her mother exclaims, “Oh, Jane Victoria, isn’t this your home?” (201). Robin’s dismay, or even jealousy, at Jane’s connection to place on the Island creates a relationship dynamic between them where Jane must step into the role of parent, protecting her mother’s feelings. As Jane of Lantern Hill, she does not belong to her mother; instead, she belongs to the place she has been able to tend.

Jane’s room in Toronto also becomes a compelling illustration of the differences between the two spaces. Upon returning to Gay Street, she finds her room “had not

grown any friendlier” (196). Therefore, she turns her attention outside to search for the connection with place she has on the Island. Instead, she finds that the “huge old trees about 60 Gay were sufficient unto themselves … they were not her friendly birches and spruces” (196). “Sufficient unto themselves” reinforces that Gay Street does not depend on Jane’s tending or active nurturing, keeping her from developing the space into a place. On the Island, she gazes out her bedroom window at “starry hills and the moon shining on woodland fields,” but, in the city, the “clamour of Bloor Street assail[s] her ears” (196). The light and sound pollution in the city is put into sharp contrast with the harbour lights of Lantern Hill. Where Toronto assails her, Lantern Hill guides and shapes her.

While Gay Street is not a home, Jane is comforted by her awareness of Lantern Hill, making living at Gay Street somewhat more manageable: “Because in a very real sense Jane was still living on the Island … When she lay awake at night she was hearing all the sounds of her Island home” (198). Because Jane has created a home in PEI, that rootedness continues to nurture her in Toronto; she knows that she will return to Lantern Hill and that Toronto as an “away” is temporary. Jane no longer has to try to make Gay Street into a home, and, as a result, she feels somewhat freed from her grandmother’s control, knowing “she would never be the least bit afraid of grandmother again” (268). Grandmother is sure that “[Jane] will soon forget everything about Lantern Hill” (197). Her mother, however, “felt the change in Jane, as did everybody” (197). Because Grandmother also seems to sense a shift in Jane, she seeks to regain some power through giving Jane what she thinks Jane should desire. For example, she buys Jane an expensive, purebred cat for Christmas. A servant explains Grandmother’s reasoning:

> The old lady is at her wits’ end how to wean Miss Victoria away from the Island and that’s what this cat means. Thinks she … a real Persian, costing seventy-five dollars and looking like the King of All Cats, will soon put the child out of conceit with her miserable common kittens. (208–209; ellipsis in original)

This cat represents the tensions that Jane encounters between these two places. In PEI, Jane has “common” cats that she can tend to, care for, and hug. The “King of All Cats” represents the upper-class, regal lifestyle that Grandmother idealizes and embodies. While Jane is able to provide basic care for the cat, the relationship is not reciprocal: “the cat didn’t want to be liked. … It did not want to be petted or

caressed” (209). Much like the rest of Jane’s experience on Gay Street, her tending is not desired. Epperly notes that “Montgomery is not praising domesticity for its own sake, but for what it represents to Jane: discovery of her own powers of creativity and control” (*Fragrance* 221). In this way, we similarly argue that Jane’s *Bildungsroman* is “a novel of selfhood” (Pratt 37). Jane’s powers of creativity and control continue to be denied to her on Gay Street, even though they are what she truly desires.

Crucial to Jane’s future experience is learning that Toronto offers a greater range of spaces than she has previously encountered. While visiting with her mother in Lakeside Gardens, a new neighbourhood, Jane stumbles upon a house, and “she knew at first sight that it belonged to her … just as Lantern Hill did” (222; ellipsis in original). In imagining her life there, she makes a clear connection between homemaking and tending: “she could see herself in it, hanging curtains, polishing the glass doors, making cookies in the kitchen” (222–23). For the first time, she imagines creating a home in Toronto. When Jane expresses a wish to live in Lakeside Gardens, Robin shares her feelings about the house on Gay Street: “mother said, quickly and vehemently, ‘I hate it!’” (224). Robin’s acknowledgement of “hating” Gay Street echoes an earlier statement made by Jane: “I hate this place, mummy, I hate it,” to which Robin replies, “There is no escape for either of us” (45). In stumbling upon a new house, both seem to have found the hope of a new life. For Jane, there is suddenly no longer the binary of Lantern Hill and Toronto: there is a new possibility of tending to a home in Toronto that includes her mother and leaves behind Grandmother’s control and the prison-like features of Gay Street.

A Return Home to Lantern Hill

When summer returns, it is time for Jane to reunite with her father on the Island, emphasizing the cyclical nature of the home-away-home narrative, or in Jane’s case, the away-home-away-home story. Even though Jane has come into her own identity in Toronto and has found a potential home to share with her mother, because she has tended to Lantern Hill, it continues to represent a salient part of her identity. As Jane approaches Lantern Hill, the narration summarizes her excitement with the phrase, “Home after exile!” (229). This statement suggests that Gay Street is not just a space, but a space to which she is banished. Upon arrival at Lantern Hill, she notes that “every room welcomed her back. Nothing was changed … But the silver needed polishing and the geraniums needed pruning and *when* had the kitchen floor been scrubbed?” (229). Jane focuses on how she can tend to Lantern Hill

domestically, how she can replicate the same acts that made this space into a meaningful place and ultimately a home. Her domestic tasks are not only central to how she identifies with her home, but also to how she conceptualizes her middle-class identity: a caretaker, a daughter, someone who belongs to PEI.

The description of how time has stopped at Lantern Hill during Jane's absence indicates the centrality of tending to the creation of her place in PEI. Tuan argues that a space becomes a place when we pause long enough for meaningful connections to be made. Since, for Jane, place-making occurs through the act of tending, rather than pausing, during her time in Toronto, Lantern Hill has been almost suspended in time: the silver has been permitted to tarnish, the geraniums have grown with abandon, and the floors have remained unscrubbed. Even though her father lived there, he stopped winding the clock in her absence. After their first dinner, "dad got up and started the ship clock. Time had begun once more" (231). Lantern Hill was missing its most significant human influence in Jane's absence. Upon her return, her father says, "Come out and see the garden, Jane … it burst into bloom as soon as it heard you were coming" (230). Jane's tending is central to making this space a home, not only for herself but for her relationships on the Island as well. Her return symbolically causes the garden to bloom.

Not only is Lantern Hill reinvigorated upon Jane's return, but she herself is brought back to life as she returns to a place she can tend. In Toronto, Gay Street is fenced in, literally and figuratively, restricting Jane's movement and keeping her from engaging with the natural world. The manicured cityscape contrasts with the view outside the windows at Lantern Hill, "where ferns grew as high as your waist, and there were stones lying about covered with velvet green moss" (101). Here, things grow freely, and there is a sense of wildness. In Toronto, there is no garden for Jane to tend to, so she has to rely on an imaginary one. She is aware of the notion of seed catalogues before she is granted the freedom to use one. After her first summer in PEI, she spends time at Gay Street "poring over seed catalogues, picking out things for dad to plant in spring. She loved to read the description of the vegetables and imagine she saw rows of them at Lantern Hill" (215). On the Island, the garden is physically real, and her tending leads to a harvest. She no longer needs to imagine one, much as she no longer needs to polish the moon because she can polish her own possessions in the home on Lantern Hill.

Gay Street's borders prevent Jane's engagement not only with space, but also with the people there. Love does not move freely or easily. On Lantern Hill, however, gaps in the garden's paling fence are symbolic of the fluidity of place, where Jane establishes and tends to nurturing relationships. While at Gay Street, Jane's movement is restricted by the expectations of gender and performance of class. In contrast, the narrator describes the Island as "her spirit's home" (229). In Toronto, expectations happen to Jane, as external forces, whereas Jane's connection with the Island begins from within—her spirit and her inborn desire to tend—and results in her embodiment in the place. The narration uses language showing Jane's bodily connection to PEI: the road "seemed to be running through her veins like quicksilver" (90) and "[t]he island's got into [her] blood" (190). She is free in a way that she is not in Toronto: "The first thing Jane did … was to run with the wind to the shore and take a wild exultant dip in the stormy waves. She fairly flung herself into the arms of the sea" (232). "Run with the wind" and "fairly flung" are bodily, place-based encounters that sharply contrast the restrictions she faces at Gay Street.

Conclusion

At the end of the second summer, Jane returns to Toronto, where she soon receives letters indicating that her father might be getting divorced and remarried. Whereas for her past trips to PEI she has had adult companions, this time Jane organizes her own travel: budgeting her journey, buying her ticket, taking a taxi to the station, and travelling by train on her own. Rothwell notes that "Jane takes charge of her own life. *Jane* ends with restoration and healing, and the disparate parts of Jane's family are knit into a whole once more" (142). In this final act of moving between locations, Jane's independence and agency cement her developing maturity and solidify the Island as her created and chosen home. Upon arrival, she becomes sick with a "dangerous type of pneumonia" (289). Robin, hearing from Andrew of Jane's illness, returns to the Island and reconciles with her husband. Leaving Gay Street permits Robin to join her own nuclear family, as desired.

When Jane recovers, her family begins planning for the future, including a new house in Toronto. Jane thinks back to the house she had discovered and imagines that "they would give it life" (292). While her father claims that "How you live is much more important than where you live … but we must have a roof over us" (292), Jane's relationship to place, as argued throughout this paper, is dependent on the "where you live," as she values the sense of magic in a place, as well as on the

“how you live,” through her ability to tend, which the middle class offers her. In planning her future, Jane notes her role in the family: “She, Jane, understood them both and could interpret them to each other. And have an eye on the housekeeping as well” (293). Rothwell argues that this new balance creates a “comfortable equilibrium” for their family (143). This imagined future cements Jane’s role as the home’s domestic centre and creator. While tending is central to Jane’s burgeoning sense of self, place, and relationships, locating a child in this role with her parents is perhaps unusual, if not unfair. Our reading of this role reversal, where Jane is teaching her own mother how to keep house and show care, contrasts with Chlebek’s view of Jane as “preparing the domestic path for her mother’s arrival” (149). Even though her mother will be there, Jane, not Robin, takes on the role of idealized mother in their family, ultimately preparing Jane to grow toward a domestic womanhood and fulfilling the girl’s *Bildungsroman* and her inborn desire to tend to places and others.

Tuan contends that pausing in a space creates a place. In this paper, we have traced Jane’s establishment of place and ultimately home in PEI through her active tending, moving beyond Tuan’s concept of pausing. After her first summer on the Island, Jane thinks, “P. E. Island is a lovely place” (93). Through her acts of tending, she creates a particular kind of place—a home. She has the confidence to pass her knowledge of tending to others, such as her mother, who have not had the opportunity to learn that process. By being prepared to undertake the domestic management of their new home in Toronto, Jane ultimately ensures the continuity of her family. Her desired proficiency at domestic work leads to her becoming a valuable, productive member of her community on a variety of fronts: driving a hay wagon, roofing, organizing an adoption, even capturing a runaway lion. Her efforts reflect her now established role in the middle class as someone who can actively care for others. In this way, then, not only does Jane’s tending turn Lantern Hill into a home, but, in turn, the place itself gives Jane the opportunity to become Jane *of* Lantern Hill.

Dr. Erin Spring is an associate professor in the Werklund School of Education at the University of Calgary. She holds a B.A. (honours) in English from Trent University and a B.Ed. from Queen’s University. Erin was a classroom teacher in London, UK, before returning to graduate studies. She earned an M.Phil. and Ph.D. from the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge. Between 2014 and 2017, she was a post-doctoral fellow in the Institute for Child and Youth Studies at the

University of Lethbridge. Broadly speaking, Erin's interdisciplinary research focuses on young people's literacies, texts, and cultures. Drawing on a range of methodological approaches, including reading discussion groups, photo-elicitation, and map-making, Erin's research seeks to understand the ways in which young people make sense of their identities through reading, writing, and art. Her research projects are united thematically by a shared investment in stories and storytelling as a way of articulating identity development, with a particular focus on the influence of place. She has two peer-reviewed publications on *Anne of Green Gables*. Erin presented research at the LMMI conference at UPEI in 2016.

Dr. Ashley N. Reese is assistant director with the Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning at the University of South Florida. She received her M.Phil. and Ph.D. in children's literature from the University of Cambridge (UK). Her recent book is *The Rise of American Girls' Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2021). She has articles published in *Barnboken*, *Nordic Journal of Childlit Aesthetics*, *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, and *Girlhood Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*. Her research focuses on gender in turn-of-the-century North American girls' literature. Ashley presented research at the LMMI Conference at UPEI in 2016.

Banner Image: Summer Street – Summerside, Prince Edward Island, 1907. Ryrie-Campbell Collection. KindredSpaces.ca.

- 1 For example, Joy Alexander explores geographical identity in relation to the character of Anne of Green Gables. Rita Bode and Jean Mitchell have an edited collection exploring nature in L.M. Montgomery's novels and journals.
- 2 In "'I've Never Belonged to Anybody'" we argue that Anne of Green Gables completes the *Bildungsroman* arc by rooting in place and cementing her role in the domestic sphere.
- 3 For example, Heather Ladd and Erin Spring discuss Anne's naming in relation to place and how she similarly becomes Anne of Green Gables.
- 4 While *Jane* is a Canadian novel, because of shared elements, such as the heroines' *Bildungsromane* taking the form of growing down into motherhood and marriage, and an emphasis on patriotism, Sardella-Ayres and Reese argue that English-speaking American and Canadian girls' literature form a collective genre (37).

Back to top

Article Info

Creative Commons License
Copyright: Erin Spring and Ashley Reese, 2024. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. (Creative Commons BY 4.0), which allows the user to share, copy, and redistribute the material in any medium or format and adapt, remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially, PROVIDED the Licensor is given attribution in accordance with the terms and conditions of the CC BY 4.0.

Peer reviewed
No

Works Cited

Alcott, Louisa May. *Little Women*. Roberts Brothers, 1868–1869.

Alexander, Joy. “Anne with Two ‘G’s: Green Gables and Geographical Identity.” Blackford, pp. 41–60.

Avery, Gillian. *Behold the Child: American Children and their Books, 1621–1922*. Bodley Head, 1994.

Blackford, Holly, editor. *100 Years of Anne with an “E”: The Centennial Study of* Anne of Green Gables. U of Calgary P, 2012.

Bode, Rita, and Jean Mitchell, editors. *L.M. Montgomery and the Matter of Nature(s)*. McGill-Queen’s UP, 2018.

Canfield, Dorothy. *Understood Betsy*. Henry Holt, 1916.

Chlebek, Diana Arlene. “The Canadian Family and Female Adolescent Development During the 1930s: *Jane of Lantern Hill*.” Gammel and Epperly, pp. 145–152.

Epperly, Elizabeth Rollins. *The Fragrance of Sweet-Grass: L.M. Montgomery's Heroines and the Pursuit of Romance*. U of Toronto P, 1992.

Foster, Shirley, and Judy Simons. *What Katy Read: Feminist Re-Readings of “Classic” Stories for Girls*. U of Iowa P, 1995.

Fraustino, Lisa Rowe, and Karen Coats. “Mothers Wanted.” *Mothers in Children’s and Young Adult Literature: From Eighteenth Century to Postfeminism*, edited by Lisa Rowe Fraustino and Karen Coats, U of Mississippi P, 2016, pp. 3–24.

Gammel, Irene, and Elizabeth Epperly, *L.M. Montgomery and Canadian Culture*. U of Toronto P, 1999.

Gillen, Mollie. *The Wheel of Things: A Biography of L.M. Montgomery, Author of* Anne of Green Gables. Fitzhentry and Whiteside, 1975.

Grafton, Janet. “A Subtle Cartography: Navigating the Past in Children’s Fiction.” *Maps and Mapping in Children’s Literature: Landscapes, Seascapes and Cityscapes*, edited by Nina Goga and Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, John Benjamins Publishing, 2017, pp. 59–74.

Hilder, Monika. “The Ethos of Nurture: Revisiting Domesticity in L.M. Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables*.” Blackford, pp. 211–27.

Ladd, Heather, and Erin Spring. “Feminizing Thomson’s *The Seasons*: Identity, Gender, and Seasonal Aesthetics in L.M. Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables*.” *L.M. Montgomery and Gender*, edited by E. Holly Pike and Laura M. Robinson, McGill-Queen’s UP, 2021, pp. 283–304.

Lawrence, Heidi A. “Absent Fathers: Conversations between L.M. Montgomery and Madeleine L’Engle.” *Children and Childhoods in L.M. Montgomery*, edited by Rita Bode, Lesley D. Clement, E. Holly Pike, and Margaret Steffler, McGill-Queen’s UP, 2022, pp. 182–201.

Montgomery, L.M. *Anne of Green Gables*. L.C. Page, 1908.

---. *The Blue Castle.* McClelland and Stewart, 1926.

---. *Emily of New Moon*. McClelland and Stewart, 1923.

---. *Jane of Lantern Hill*. 1937. Tundra Books, 2018.

Nodelman, Perry, and Mavis Reimer. *The Pleasures of Children’s Literature*. 3rd ed., Allyn and Bacon, 2003.

Pratt, Annis. *Archetypal Patterns in Women’s Fiction*. Indiana UP, 1981.
Reese, Ashley N. *The Rise of American Girls’ Literature*. Cambridge UP, 2021.

Reese, Ashley N., and Erin Spring. "'I've Never Belonged to Anybody—Not Really': Space, Place, and the *Bildungsroman* in L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* (1908)." *Barnelitterært forskningstidsskrift/Nordic Journal of Childlit Aesthetics*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2022, pp. 1–10, https://doi.org/10.18261/blft.13.1.5.

Reimer, Mavis. "'No Place like Home': The Facts and Figures of Homelessness in Contemporary Texts for Young People." *Barnelitterært Forskningstidsskrift/Nordic Journal of Childlit Aesthetics*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2013, https://doi.org/10.3402/blft.v4i0.20605.

---. "Discourses of Home in Canadian Children's Literature." *Home Words: Discourses of Children's Literature in Canada*, edited by Mavis Reimer, Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2008, pp. xi–1.

Rothwell, Erika. "Knitting Up the World: L.M. Montgomery and Maternal Feminism in Canada." Gammel and Epperly, pp. 133–44.

Sanders, Joe Sutliff. *Disciplining Girls: Understanding the Origins of the Classic Orphan Girl Story*. Johns Hopkins UP, 2011.

Sardella-Ayres, Dawn, and Ashley N. Reese. "Where to from Here? Emerging Conversations on Girls' Literature and Girlhood." *Girlhood Studies*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 33–49, https://doi.org/10.3167/ghs.2020.130104.

Squire, Shelagh J. "Ways of Seeing, Ways of Being: Literature, Place, and Tourism in L.M. Montgomery's Prince Edward Island." *A Few Acres of Snow: Literary and Artistic Images of Canada*, edited by Paul Simpson-Housley and Glen Norcliffe, Dundurn Press, 1992, pp. 137–47.

Trites, Roberta Seelinger. *Waking Sleeping Beauty: Feminist Voices in Children's Novels*. U of Iowa P, 1997.

Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. U of Minnesota P, 1977.

Wilson, Melissa B., and Kathy G. Short. "Goodbye Yellow Brick Road: Challenging the Mythology of Home in Children's Literature." *Children's Literature in Education*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2012, pp. 129–44, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10583-011-9138-z.