Threads of Dreams

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I was fourteen when I first stepped into the landscapes of L.M. Montgomery's worlds, discovering not only unforgettable stories but unforgettable writing as well. Here was an author who portrayed the facets of small country villages, the land in all its moods, and bookish heroines who knew the value of dreams. I felt as if Maud had somehow been able to glimpse into the future and across the miles to see me and my life on the family farm in the Kansas Flint Hills. I saw myself reflected in her reality, not because I imitated it, but because I knew it. Though I watched waves of tallgrass prairie and not the sapphire swells of Montgomery's Atlantic Ocean, I felt an equally enduring tie to the landscapes and horizons surrounding me. I was acquainted with the Mrs. Lyndes, Matthews, Marillas, and even the Josie Pyes of my own rural community, and I, like Maud and many of her characters, interpreted the world around me by way of the written word.

I dreamed of writing from an early age, but it was with Montgomery's works that I began to believe that a farm girl from a small town in Kansas could portray her rural community and tell her stories to a broader audience. There was value in those settings and in those tales, although, like Maud's most autobiographical character, Emily Byrd Starr, I would sometimes wonder if a rural Kansas postmark might thwart my efforts.1 Still, I persevered, and reading Maud's journals later in life only inspired me more to be true to my roots, to write as I knew how and not to imitate other authors, styles, or trends. Some of my writing is unashamedly inspired by Montgomery; some isn't. Still, all of it is my interpretation of my world and the lives that fill it. I try to pay the same attention to telling a good story, capturing the breath of a moment, the features that I see over and over again in Maud's work. This is what has most impacted me as a writer.

I often wonder how many readers from how many settings in how many cultures around the globe have felt the same as I: as if somehow Maud had intuited their lives, seen them, known them and their realities, and woven her stories from the threads of our dreams.2 If any of my own writing can inspire a sense of connection like that, then I will have succeeded.

Bio: Julie A. Sellers is the author of the novel *Ann of Sunflower Lane* (Meadowlark Press, 2022), a Kansas National Education Association's Reading Circle Commission Recommended Title and a 2023 High Plains Book Award Finalist, and of *Kindred Verse: Poems Inspired by Anne of Green Gables* (Blue Cedar Press, 2021). She was the Kansas Author's Club's Prose Writer of the Year (2020, 2022, 2023) and the Kansas Voices Contest Overall Winner in Poetry (2022) and Prose (2017, 2019, 2024). Julie's creative prose and poetry have appeared in publications such as *Journal of L.M. Montgomery Studies, Kansas City Voices, Flint Hills Review, 105 Meadowlark Reader*, *Cagibi*, *Wanderlust*, *The Very Edge*, *Unlost*, and *Kansas Time + Place*.

- 1 In *Emily's Quest*, Emily's challenges in finding a publisher for her novel inspire her to wonder, "Was it not the fatal Prince Edward Island postmark that condemned it—the little out-of-the-world province from which no good thing could ever come?" (149).
- 2 Montgomery's works have had international appeal both in the original English and in translation. From the enduring affinity of Japanese readers for Hanako Muraoka's translations to the Polish musical adaptation of *The Blue Castle* under communism, Montgomery's novels have a global reach among readers of both similar and different backgrounds.

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Work Cited

Montgomery, L.M. *Emily's Quest*. 1927. Bantam, 1983.