

An Interdisciplinary Approach to Maritime Women's Diaries :

**Laura Wood
Victoria Ross
L.M. Montgomery**

© Laurie Alexander 1989

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University.

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Abstract

This thesis is a study in the historic and literary value of Maritime women's diaries. I attempt to justify the necessity for the study of women's diaries by briefly looking at and categorizing all the published diaries of the region. Women's diaries have been disproportionately under-published compared to those written by men. This reflects both the obscurity of women's writing and the patriarchal bias of historical analysis. The thesis is interdisciplinary in nature, drawing on theoretical arguments from several disciplines. To fully understand the value of women's experiences as they have been shaped by Maritime realities, it is necessary to extend research beyond traditional academic boundaries. I discuss the relationship of women's diaries of this region to the emergence of women's studies as a valid discipline of study, and I relate diaries to recent historical trends. I also attempt to place the female diarists of this region in an international context by applying contemporary literary arguments to their journals. I chose three case studies for this analysis : Laura Wood, Victoria Ross and L.M. Montgomery. Each of these three case studies is required in order to present a balanced argument on the differences in diary motivation. To date, these diaries, representing journal literature by women from the Maritime region, have not been analyzed within a context of the literary theoretical frameworks found in this thesis.

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Introduction

A few years ago I was fortunate to discover the diary of a young New Brunswick woman, Laura Wood, written sporadically over the decade of the '870s. These were times of great change for the woman as she struggled to establish a family and community life. Her personal development was set against a changing society as the young province strove to adapt to rapidly developing technologies and a shifting economy. Reading her diary was intriguing; it was like entering a time capsule and stepping back into a bygone era. My fascination with this diary was the genesis for an exploration of women's diary literature and, ultimately, this thesis. It became immediately apparent to me that very few Maritime women's diaries are available to the public, and the reasons for the lack of access to these diaries interested me. I thought initially that perhaps women produced proportionately fewer diaries. This seemed unlikely to me. There was clearly some other explanation. I suspected that the diaries were written but were merely obscure, and that perhaps an explanation for this could be found in the notion of what publishers regarded worthy of publication. By investigating the ratio between men's and women's published diaries in the region, I found that the number of diaries by men was overwhelmingly disproportionate. It became clear during this research that it was not the inherent value of the male diaries that secured their publication, but that these diaries reflect the historical preoccupations of the era in which they were published. Before the emergence of women's studies, the male

agenda of history effectively suppressed women's diaries. This whole process of making good material obscure needed to be investigated.

An idea gradually emerged out of a study of diary theory to investigate the various levels of obscurity characteristic of women's lives, women's work and women's writing in the past. In addition to the diary that first captured my interest, the unpublished "Journal of Everyday Affairs" of an 1870s New Brunswick woman, I focused on a self-published diary by the wife of a private school principal in the 1930s. Finally, the period of the thesis work coincided with the publication of the two volumes of L.M. Montgomery's journals. Although this was a work by a woman who had international recognition for her writing, it was important for my analysis that these journals were mostly composed in the period of Montgomery's obscurity. These journals illustrate as well as the other two diaries, the struggle for emergence so characteristic of women's lives. This thesis, then, is a study in the value of Maritime women's diaries, and in the processes that have kept such worthwhile material obscure until the very recent emergence of women's studies as an academic discipline.

From the outset of the project, I have narrowed my research to the Maritime provinces during a broad time period roughly restricted to the years between Confederation and the Second World War. The Maritimes provide an excellent study area for several reasons. By the 1820s the region had already had more than a half century of continuous cultural development, and a very compact community of

communities had emerged, united by common ties to the sea and rural settlement.¹ This period of early development would be longer still if we brought into consideration community settlement by others than those of an anglophone heritage.

The history of settlement by French-speaking peoples was discontinuous, and they, along with other non-English language inhabitants, such as those of Gaelic, German, or of an indigenous heritage, are beyond the range of my study. Examples of diary writing by women from working class, rural, or ethnic backgrounds are very rare. These women belonged to an oral culture that did not have the advantage of exposure to educational facilities; most of these women, in fact, lacked the necessary leisure time to reflect on their day's activities. Unfortunately, the few diaries generated in such adverse environments were less likely to withstand the ravages of time. No examples of urban working class journals have survived, due, in part, to the transient nature of that society.² The relative stability and social harmony that developed among the communities that were predominantly English-speaking in the Maritimes was quite conducive to a thriving domesticity. In this very patriarchal society, women had to strive with a single-minded determination to find an outlet for creativity. The diary in such a context was an accepted, at

1. Clark, S.D. The Developing Canadian Community (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968) : 41-62.

2. Conrad, Margaret "Recording Angels : The Private Chronicles of Women from the Maritime Provinces of Canada, 1750-1950" (Ottawa : Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women Papers no. 4, 1982) in which preliminary conclusions from "the Maritime Women's Archives Project" can be found. This will be examined in detail in the following chapter.

times even fashionable, egress (or sanctuary) for the female imagination.

The acceptance of this form of creative literature for females by the middle and upper classes provides modern researchers and critics with the basis of their view of the genre's most serious limitations. In the introduction to Private Chronicles : A Study of English Diaries , Robert Fothergill states that :

In the Victorian era diary writing, as a conventional habit among persons of culture, seems to have reached its apogee . . . [it was] . . . a time when diary writing was becoming a genteel literary sideline.³

It is unavoidable that in the Maritime region, an analysis of female diaries is biased towards white, literate, middle-class women.

However, the experiences of these chroniclers, and the time periods from which they wrote, covers such a range of occupations and historical eras that diversity is an integral factor in their analysis.

One of the first tasks in researching a potential thesis subject is to compose an accurate working definition of the topic at hand. It soon became clear there was not going to be a straightforward and simple definition nor a description of terms like diary, journal, memoir and autobiography. The latter two genres of writing, by their reflective and retrospective nature, can be quickly disassociated from diary or journal writing :

The diary is a written record of daily experiences. The diary (from the Latin *dies*, meaning "day") had very

³. Fothergill, Robert. Private Chronicles : A Study of English Diaries (London : Oxford University Press, 1974) : 34.

practical origins but has in the course of time taken on literary, social, and even philosophical dimensions. It is one of the most flexible of literary forms and consequently has attracted authors of an exceptionally wide range of interests and varying degrees of talent . . . its very dailiness distinguished it from such forms as the memoir or autobiography, which are recollective rather than immediate.⁴

This leaves us only with the former terms, diary and journal, and the need to distinguish between these. In France, the distinction does not arise since only one term, the "journal intime," is used to describe all personal introspective literature written as a record of daily experiences. Canadian, British, and American reference literature, the most general reference sources, allocate only a few lines or paragraphs to each topic. They do not distinguish between the terms journal and diary, and the two are used interchangeably to describe or complement each other.⁵ It is only when a reference publication deals directly with this subject that scholars draw a distinction.

James Cummings, in the preface to American Diaries : An Annotated Bibliography of Published American Diaries and Journals, Volume 1 : 1492-1844 , writes :

Although the terms tend to be used somewhat interchangeably, a diary is to me separate and distinct from a journal. A diary is for everyday and tells what one did and thought, in the random, nonthematic fashion of real life. A journal is more formal, usually a book of

⁴. Encyclopedia Americana , 9 (1981) : 67.

⁵. For example, the Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933): 20-21, defines diary as a daily record of events or transactions, a journal. Generally, Encyclopaedias too, do not distinguish between diary and journal. For example, see the Encyclopaedia Americana 9 (1980) : 67-68, which uses the two words interchangeably for the same definition.

observations on particular events, situations, or preoccupations of the writer. ⁶

Scholars interested in diaries and journals agree that there is a formal distinction between the two terms, the diary being subjective and the journal objective. However, "in practise, there is often little or no difference, for journals are rarely altogether impersonal" and, conversely, many diarists often mistitle their highly intimate manuscript "a journal". ⁷ For the sake of a less repetitious text, I shall use the two terms interchangeably to identify the general diary form.

The study of women's diaries in this region, regardless of the researcher's academic discipline or theoretical perspective, has encountered many obstacles. It is generally agreed by investigators with a regional mandate that, until recently, investigation of the output of various genres has tended to exclude analysis east of the Quebec-New Brunswick border. Feminist researchers argue that until very recently women, too, have been systematically ignored in the reconstruction of the Canadian past. Therefore, it stands to reason that the study of women's participation in this often neglected region has been a doubly arduous task. There are many examples of this neglect, even in the narrowly defined field of personal chronicles.

⁶. Cummings, James. "Preface" in American Diaries : An Annotated Bibliography of Published American Diaries and Journals Volume 1 : Diaries Written from 1492 to 1844 Laura Arksey, Nancy Pries, and Marcia Reed eds. (Detroit : Gale Research Co., 1983) : vii.

⁷. Matthews, William. American Diaries : An Annotated Bibliography of American Diaries Written Prior to the Year 1861 (Boston : J.S. Canner and Co., 1959) : ix, and Steven Kagle American Diary Literature : 1620-1799 (Boston: Twayne Publishing, 1979) : 16.

This thesis attempts to contribute to the inroads that are being made to correct some of these extensive and fundamental gaps.

The emphasis on "the great men" in history has been reflected in the choice of diaries considered worthy of publication. If we compose a list of all diaries published in this region before 1965, a very definite pattern emerges which provides ample proof of a male-orientated stream of historical thought. In Atlantic Canada there were forty-five diaries written by men that had been published in some form or other before this date. The themes of these diaries are consistent with the dominant ideology they represent. Almost without exception, the journals are either military, missionary, or voyage related. "Gordon's Journal of the Siege of Louisbourg, 1758," found in the Nova Scotia Historical Society Collection V(1886-1887), Reverend Dr. Charles Inglis's "Diaries and Correspondance" in the Canadian Archives Report (1912), and Lieut. William Booth's "Travel and Military Diary of the Maritimes" in the Report of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia (1934) are typical entries.⁸ Indeed, the siege of Louisbourg seems to have held a special place in the historical mind of the early twentieth century as it ranks at the top as the most common topic. In comparison, before 1965 only three diaries by Maritime women achieved publication; two of these were published privately by the families of the diarists. Women's private writings, with themes unrelated to military or missionary work, had no perceived value to the historical or patriarchal mind. In 1949, "The Diary of Mary Ann Norris : 1818-1838" appeared in the Dalhousie

⁸. See Appendix, A List of the Published Male Diaries of the Region.

Review. It has the dubious distinction of being the sole female diary of the Maritimes to appear in print as a historical document up to that time.

William Matthews's Canadian Diaries and Autobiographies provides us with an instance of this centralist and dominant-culture bias. This reference book has 1276 entries, of which only 117 are by women writers. Further breakdown of the distribution of entries shows that of the 1276 diarists and autobiographical writers in Canada, only 55 (which amounts to fewer than 5 percent) hail from the peripheral Atlantic region. This suggests that very little serious research was done by Matthews for material dealing with that part of Canada that is east of the Quebec border. In his preface, Matthews claims to "provide a generous representation of the patterns of life in Canada, as well as a panorama of Canadian history and Canadians of all ranks and occupations."⁹ Obviously Matthews does not consider either women or Maritime writers worthy of serious consideration in his "panoramic" vision of Canada. Matthews compiled this bibliography in 1950, and his biased view of the nation very much reflects the attitudes characteristic of his era.

A more recent example of regional oversight has no such excuse. Marion Fowler wrote an entry for the 1983 edition of The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature entitled "Pioneer Memoirs". Her entry was ambitious in scope. In only a few pages, Fowler attempted to give the reader a broad overview of autobiographical writing in the

⁹ Matthews, William. Canadian Diaries and Autobiographies (Los Angeles : University of California Press, 1950) : iv.

nation from a historical perspective, covering a span of 140 years from the 1780s to the 1920s. The Maritimes are allocated one very brief paragraph which begins, "The main thrust of settlement in the Maritimes came from the United Empire Loyalists, from 1783 to 1812, but few recorded the pioneer experience, perhaps because they were already old hands at it."¹⁰ She then contributes a mere two examples of Maritime literature of this nature. A great contrast to this is her thorough treatment of Ontario, in which publications are categorized by both gender and region. Here she is able to cite seventeen examples. Her most atrocious statement reflecting Maritime misrepresentation follows in the brief discussion of the western provinces :

In the flatness of that prairie world, man was the only upright thing, casting a long shadow, gradually making his mark. Ego counted, perhaps that is one reason why there are far more memoirs from the prairies than from the Maritimes, where the sea and mist swamped and dissolved any sure sense of self. ¹¹

It is difficult to believe that this glaring disregard for the Maritime region persists to such an extent, especially in this decade. There has been a strong movement, indeed a crusading revisionism, from within a multitude of academic disciplines to challenge the centralist vision of Canada.

Regional researchers have made significant advances in the battle to win a distinct and vital place for Atlantic Canada in the wider

¹⁰ Fowler, Marion. "Pioneer Memoirs" in The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature William Toye ed., (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1983) : 651.

¹¹ Fowler 651.

Canadian context. One of the chief advocates, Dr. Ernest Forbes of the University of New Brunswick history department, argues that :

[historically] . . . common economic and social interests tended to encourage unity. The area's separation from other centres of population, orientation towards the sea, and dependence on industries of primary production helped to foster a regional consciousness. . . . 12

He further argues that the Maritimes, given its history, location, and landscape, "should be conscious of possessing a character and individuality of its own," and that this should find expression in a strong literary tradition.¹³ This statement refutes Matthews's and Fowler's claims that there is a lack of Maritime literary activity. In the past two decades, a substantial body of scholarly literature has surfaced to refute this misguided assumption. As well, rising social awareness of, and an interest in, women's issues has acted as a catalyst to promote the publicity of women's diaries.

There has been a movement of diary literature from obscurity to prominence in women's historical tools. "Scholars have recognised our need to hear the stories told by little-known or neglected women, for only by hearing their voices can we rightfully evaluate our own past and their place within it".¹⁴ Researchers who study literature from a feminist perspective also have been quick to appreciate the importance of diary material to their work. Many of these researchers perceive the diary as a female genre of literature, "the opposite of the masculine alchemy" where the themes of service, love,

¹² Forbes, Ernest. Aspects of Maritime Regionalism, 1867-1927 (Ottawa : Canadian Historical Association Historical Booklet no 36, 1983) : 3-21.

¹³ Forbes 3-21.

¹⁴ Huff, Cynthia. British Women's Diaries (New York : AMS Press, 1985) : x.

weaknesss, inadequacy and fear belong characteristically to female utterance."¹⁵ The impact of this trend towards universal appreciation of female diary literature has not escaped our "sea and mist swamped" region. We are very fortunate to have researchers in the Atlantic region attuned to this cutting edge of feminist methodology. Their work has provided a solid foundation for further research and analysis of Maritime women's private chronicles.¹⁶

This project attempts to look at diaries from two different perspectives. First, if we are to develop an accurate and complete sense of the transitory nature of the region's community life over time, and of the impact of emerging technologies on these communities and of the roles of individuals within these societies, it is necessary to include the intimate reflections on daily routines and on social and global events that diaries and journals can provide. To this end, the diaries of Maritime women which appear in print will be analysed for what they reveal about the past and the roles that the women fulfilled within their particular society. Second, this study will focus on the importance of the diaries themselves to the women who wrote them, concentrating on the literary function and impact of the intimate manuscript on the author. It is inevitable that the examination of the motivations for female diary writing in the past cannot escape the historical bias of the modern researcher.

¹⁵. See Patricia Meyer Spacks's "Women's Stories, Women's Selves" The Hudson Review, 30 (1977-78) : 35.

¹⁶. For example, see Margaret Conrad, Toni Laidlaw and Dorina Smyth eds. No Place Like Home : Diaries and Letters of Nova Scotia Women 1771-1938 (Halifax : Formac Publishing, 1988). This will be examined in detail in the following chapter.

A chapter on theoretical considerations precedes a detailed look at three specific Maritime women's diaries. This first chapter places diary research in an international setting, presents general and current trends in diary research, from both literary and historical disciplines, and reviews the scholarly literature on the subject. These general principles are translated to the Maritime region through a detailed acquaintance with three Maritime female diarists. These case studies were chosen for several important reasons.

The three diarists I will focus on, Laura Wood, Victoria Burrill Ross and Lucy Maud Montgomery, all kept a secret journal, in which they recorded their daily routines and the important events of their lives. They were creative and active women, achievers and builders in their societies, and very much at the heart of what made their respective communities thrive. All three women recall life in a long-established and well-settled Maritime community. Each author, quite coincidentally, had a family history rooted in a different Maritime province, thus bringing to their writing diverse perceptions of small-town life in this region. From their diaries we get a very clear sense of the Maritimes during periods of economic and social change. When one of the diarists emigrated to Ontario, it was a move that was typical of the age in which she lived.¹⁷ These women, even though they were educated, were not the spoiled aristocracy; they all wrote of struggle and pain, of difficulties both financial and emotional. Again coincidentally, each author recalls the unbearable

¹⁷. Conrad 16. See also Alan Brookes' "Out-migration from the Maritime Provinces, 1860-1900 : Some Preliminary Considerations" in *Acadiensis* V, 2 (Spring, 1976) : 26-56.

sadness and pain of losing a child, an experience which poignantly reflects the greater incidence of infant mortality in times gone by. Each of the women in this study possessed a great independence of spirit, yet all three wrote of the singular importance of their duties as wife and mother. In fact, the role of public relations for their husbands is a recurring theme in all three diaries. In spite of the fact that nearly a century separates the earliest diarist from the most recent, there is little change in the dependence of these women on their husbands and their husbands' careers. Although all three of the diarists chose not to share their private writings with their immediate family or friends, each had a different motive for her writing and a different audience in mind. At one extreme, Laura Wood pointedly expressed that her diary was not to be read by anyone, and she desired that it be destroyed if she were to die suddenly. At the other, Lucy Maud Montgomery openly admitted that her diary would be of interest to her fans after her death, and she increasingly fashioned her journal for the benefit of a large audience. There are many contrasts in the motivations and personalities of the writers in this study -- although these women share many common attributes, such as similar social backgrounds and social philosophies.

The last chapter, or conclusion, to this study briefly examines the more obscure rural diarist. These women did not have the same priorities as the more urban women diarists. A comparison of the predominant themes and stylistic properties of the rural and urban journals enables us to better understand the shared values of our predecessors. This urban-rural comparison also highlights the

infinite number of topics that diaries shed light upon. Like its author, each and every diary has particular strengths and weaknesses. A diary may be valuable because of the literary talent of its creator. Another may contain insights into a historical period, yet be lacking in entertaining readability. Each of the journals discussed in this thesis explores a different avenue, thus illustrating the specific strengths of that particular manuscript and the different interpretations possible with this genre of literature.

Chapter I

Some Theoretical Considerations on Diary Research

Scholars of both history and literature can use diaries as a valuable research tool, or as a subject in itself. Each discipline has a different methodology, and a distinct objective by which a document or subject can be interpreted and analyzed. Since the late 1960s, both fields of study have come to recognize subjective or private writings as an important and neglected resource. From this recognition scholarly projects have developed that have brought about the discovery of new primary sources and generated a wealth of secondary material. Discussions of specific diaries, works on the history and theory of diaries, and the employment of diaries to expound social, psychological, and other theories, all expanded at a phenomenal rate.¹ During this same period an emerging feminist movement has prompted an energetic search for critical information about modern women and their foremothers.² From this we have witnessed the rise of the new interdisciplinary field of women's studies. From the inception of this field in the late 1960s and early 1970s, scholars have generally accepted the view that a holistic approach is needed to understand the distinct place of women in Canadian culture. In an article providing a justification for the need for the development of women's studies programmes at Canadian

¹ Cynthia Griffin Wolfe's 1968 article on the Puritan's outlook on life is an excellent timely example of the use of diaries to advance an argument from within the emerging social history discipline.

² The relationship between the upsurge of social history and women's history is discussed in the Introduction by Beth Light and Veronica Strong-Boag, eds. True Daughters of the North Canadian Women's History : An Annotated Bibliography (Toronto : Ontario Institute for the Study of Education, 1980) : 1.

universities, Greta Nemiroff acknowledged the importance of an interdisciplinary approach:

... the students' first introduction to Women's Studies at a university level (or perhaps at any level at all) should be an interdisciplinary one. In order to tap the great energy generated by the complex feelings people have about women and to direct this energy on a course of intellectual inquiry, it is essential to address oneself holistically to those issues that are most basic to women's experience in our culture.³

This chapter will attempt to provide an interpretation of the literature relating to diaries from the perspectives of the two disciplines of literature and history (under the umbrella of Women's Studies) with what Greta Nemiroff has termed a "creative integrated analysis" as the primary objective.

Scholars of traditional history have argued that diaries provide a valuable resource in the re-creation of an earlier period of history. These scholars tended to examine the world as it related to the political leaders and the global events they shaped. In 1923, Arthur Ponsonby's English Diaries : A Review of English Diaries from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century with an Introduction on Diary Writing was published, at that time providing the most definitive collection of British diaries to date. In his introduction, Ponsonby outlined the historical importance of these journals. He perceived that a diarist's encounters with celebrities or royalty, notable public and political events (like a king's death), and war were predominant

³ Nemiroff, Greta H. "Rationale for an Interdisciplinary Approach to Women's Studies," Canadian Women's Studies 1.1(Fall, 1978) : 62.

historical themes in the works he compiled.⁴ Corresponding attitudes towards what were -- and in some instances still are -- considered important historical themes are found in "The Diary as History" chapter in the The Diary of Samuel Pepys, edited by Robert Latham and William Matthews in 1970. Religion, state administration, and politics are the historical subjects to which Pepys's diary yields "significant information,"⁵ according to the transcript's editors. Diaries of well-placed or famous people -- often they were men -- who preserved their impressions of contemporary political events and personalities reveal much to historians that is not available in the official record.⁶ Jean Strouse, in her article "Semiprivate Lives," extends this traditional historical perspective to the women who shared this world with their celebrated mates :

Whether they grew up with, married, gave birth to, or made love with the men who made what we now think of as history, they shared that history, were shaped by it, and had their own perceptions of it. Records of some of these perceptions have been preserved, either because (and this seems unlikely) the observations were seen to have a value of their own, or, more probably, because someone thought they might contribute to the understanding of great men.⁷

It was not until the emergence of a new historical focus, and an affirmation of the study of women's culture as a valuable, distinct and valid academic approach to the past, that women's diaries became recognized in their own right. Interest in women's writing has come

⁴. Ponsonby, Arthur, M.P. English Diaries : A Review of English Diaries from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century with an Introduction on Diary Writing (London : Methun and Co. Ltd., 1923) : 17-24.

⁵. Latham, Robert and William Matthews, eds. The Diary of Samuel Pepys, volume 1, 1660 (London : G. Bell and Sons, 1970) : cxiv-cxxviii.

⁶. Tosh, John. The Pursuit of History : Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History (New York: Longman, 1953) : 38.

⁷. Strouse, Jean. "Semiprivate Lives" in Studies in Biography Daniel Aaron, ed. (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1978) : 115.

out of the general need to exploit the potential richness of studying women as a separate category of analysis :

Until recent years the telling of Canadian history has focused most on the economic and political origins of the two founding cultures, and on the winning of nationhood. Many historians, assuming that the kernel of Canadian history lay there, chose to concentrate on a small number of males of European origin whom they identified as the critical pioneers, leaders, and trendsetters. Ontario and Quebec, especially Ottawa, Toronto, and Montreal supplied the most common settings . . . Pushed by the contemporary women's movement to become more conscious of gender as a category of analysis, and aided by a resurgence of interest in social history, which broadened the range of legitimate historical topics, researchers have begun exploring the history of Canadian women.⁸

This renewed interest in social history and the emergence of a distinct women's history complement each other to a large extent. The record of experiences of ordinary, not-so-famous people provides us with a history as it was lived day-to-day, and it gives us details about work and living conditions of those people who, in our past, have constituted the vast, yet voiceless, majority. Since relatively few women have achieved political power and prestige, throughout time they have swelled the ranks of the undistinguished working people who most accurately represent the main substance of our human heritage. One of the richest and most vital sources for studies of women's lives are letters and diaries written by women themselves. In the words of Beth McGahan, this source provides researchers with "reflections of ordinary life and as such they reveal unpretentiously the

⁸. Strong-Boag, Veronica and Anita Clair Fellman, eds. Rethinking Canada : The Promise of Women's History (Toronto : Copp Clark Pittman, 1986) : 1.

fundamental divisions which are a part of the normal structure of society."⁹

Often some of the most useful explanations for the importance of diaries to historical research lie in the introductory essays of diary anthologies. One of the best of these is the essay by Cynthia Huff in her British Women's Diaries : A Descriptive Bibliography of Selected Nineteenth Century Women's Manuscript Diaries .¹⁰ In this article Huff outlines the values of diaries to social history investigations, especially as they pertain to women's lives. Huff acknowledges the limitations of diary material and reflects on the stylistic characteristics of the manuscripts included in the anthology and what these structural differences represent. She draws conclusions from her extensive diary research regarding British women's collective past experiences, particularly in the realms of family life, marriage, religion, and social relations. She perceives that "through their diverse subject matter and a variety of forms and styles, these diaries exhibit recurrent patterns which indicate how each writer evaluated her milieu and herself, and chose to construct a record which mitigated against the

⁹. McGahan, Elizabeth, Whispers of the Past : Selections from the Writings of New Brunswick Women, (Fredericton : Goose Lane Editions, 1986) : xvi.

¹⁰. Two of the best general anthologies of diaries containing excellent introductory essays are : Kagle, Steven American Diary Literature : 1620-1799 (Boston: Twayne, 1979), and Fothergill, Robert Private Chronicles : A Study of English Diaries (London: Oxford University Press, 1974). Anthologies dealing specifically with women's journals contain less comprehensive theoretic considerations; however, see also : Revelations : Diaries of Women, Moffat, Mary Jane and Charlotte Painter, eds. (New York : Random House, 1974). To date, there are only two anthologies that present women's diaries from a Maritime regional viewpoint. The introduction to Elizabeth McGahan's Whispers from the Past is interesting but retains a relatively descriptive format and thus unfortunately lacks substantial critical analysis. The most recent Maritime diary anthology, entitled No Place Like Home : Diaries and Letters of Nova Scotia Women 1771-1938, edited by Margaret Conrad, Donna E. Smyth and Toni Laidlaw rectifies this situation, providing a provocative analysis of women's diaries as a historical research tool within a regional context.

chaos of death."¹¹ Huff stresses the importance of women's diaries as a means for creating new pathways for the investigation of women's lives in a number of disciplines, echoing Nemiroff's interdisciplinary approach to recreating women's culture.¹²

"The Female World of Love and Ritual : Relations between Women in Nineteenth Century America" by Carroll Smith- Rosenberg is an early, path- breaking article that used diaries to argue her theory that nineteenth century American women formed strong emotional ties with each other. In response to the circumstances of women's "sphere" in the period, they developed supportive networks that :

were institutionalized in social conventions or rituals which accompanied virtually every important event in a woman's life, from birth to death. Such female relationships were frequently supported and paralleled by severe social restrictions on intimacy between young men and women. Within such a world of emotional richness and complexity devotion to and love of other women became a plausible and socially accepted form of human interaction. . . . Most eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women lived within a world bounded by home, church, and the institution of visiting - that endless trooping of women to each others' homes for social purposes. It was a world inhabited by children and by other women.¹³

This article has proven to be instrumental in the provision of a rationale for the notion of "separate spheres" (in which women prevail in the private domestic sphere of home and family, and men dominate

¹¹ Huff, Cynthia. British Women's Diaries : A Descriptive Bibliography of Selected Nineteenth-Century Women's Manuscript Diaries (New York : AMS Press, 1985) : ix-xxxiv.

¹² Huff x.

¹³ Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll "The Female World of Love and Ritual : Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America " Signs, 1, 1(1975) : 1-29. See also Tamara K. Hareven's Family Time and Industrial Time (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1982) and Shirley Ardener's Women and Space : Ground Rules and Social Maps (London : Croom Helm, 1981).

the public sphere of paid labour, politics and societal administration) which has become a recognized catch-phrase in the social history discipline.¹⁴

In the Maritime region we have an example of a social historian who considers women's diaries a primary research tool to explore many facets of women's history. Margaret Conrad has done extensive work in recreating the past experience of women of Maritime Canada. The notion of private and public spheres is fundamental to her re-creation of a women's regional history. Conrad has had diaries, both published and in manuscript form, at the center of her work and argues that "because women's roles in the past have been so closely tied to the private sphere, failure to consult their personal documents could seriously warp the portrayal of women in history."¹⁵ In her article "Sunday's Always Make Me Think of Home" : Time and Place in Canadian Women's History," Conrad analyzes the relationship between women's history (or the broader term, women's culture) and the notion of separate spheres. She uses the theory of a distinctly female world to present a convincing argument that personal documents are indispensable in the provision of a comprehensive analysis of Maritime women's past :

¹⁴. For articles which outline this theory of separate spheres in a Canadian context see : Silverman, Elaine Leslaw "Writing Canadian Women's History, 1970-1982 : an Historiographical Analysis" in Canadian Historical Review LXIII, 4 (December 1982) : 521, and Margaret Conrad's "Sundays Always Make Me Think of Home" : Time and Place in Canadian Women's History" in Rethinking Canada: The Promise of Women's History , 67-79.

¹⁵. Conrad, Margaret "Recording Angels : The Private Chronicles of Women from the Maritime Provinces of Canada, 1750-1950" (Ottawa : Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women Papers no. 4, 1982) : 1. Revised and Reprinted in The Neglected Majority : Essays in Canadian Women's History, volume 2, edited by Allison Prentice and Susan Mann Trofimenkoff (Toronto : McClelland and Stewart, 1985)

In taking up the issue of women's culture we are addressing fundamental questions of sources and methodology. We are shifting the focus of analysis from the world of men to that of women. If public and published documents are few and macro studies difficult, then we must investigate personal and private sources with greater seriousness. If women's participation in politics is peripheral and labour force activity is muffled, then we turn to local and family histories where women have figured prominently both as participants and as chroniclers.¹⁶

Conrad has used diaries as a primary source to support her observations on women's perceptions of the ageing process, as well as on the role of women in the out-migration experience so predominant in the late nineteenth century Maritime region.¹⁷ Her research reaches beyond the use of diaries for their documentary value only. "The Maritime Women's Archives Project" is the only regional project designed to collect and organize memoirs, diaries, and autobiographical letters written by women of the region between 1750 and 1950. The framework for this project recognizes that a multidisciplinary approach including insights from history, literature and social psychology is the "most fruitful way of analyzing women's private chronicles."¹⁸ The preliminary conclusions of this project were first outlined in a published paper, "Recording Angels : The Private Chronicles of Women from the Maritime Provinces of Canada, 1750-1950," also by Conrad. This paper provides a justification for

¹⁶ Conrad in "Sundays Always Make Me Think of Home" : Time and Place in Canadian Women's History" in Rethinking Canada, 69.

¹⁷ See "No discharge in this War" : A Note on the History of Women and Aging" in Resources for Feminist Research 2, 2(July, 1982) : 216-218, and "Chronicles of the Exodus : Myths and Realities for Maritime Canadians in the United States, 1879-1930" a paper presented to a symposium on "Four Centuries of Borderland Interaction in the International Region of the Northeast " Canadian-American Center, University of Maine at Orono, November, 1987.

¹⁸ This project is coordinated by Toni Laidlaw, Department of Education, Dalhousie University, Donna Smyth, Department of English, Acadia University, and Margaret Conrad, Department of History, Acadia University. Project objectives can be found in Margaret Conrad's "Recording Angels", 2.

the "richness" of this source, and provides a solid foundation for further research and analysis of Maritime women's private chronicles from more than just a historical perspective. The Maritime Women's Archives Project has culminated in the recent release of a full-length book on Nova Scotia women's diaries, entitled No Place Like Home : Diaries and Letters of Nova Scotia women 1771-1938. This volume echoes many of the conclusions found in the preliminary paper. It includes a comprehensive introductory essay which places Nova Scotian female diarists in a broader historical milieu and provides a valuable background to their introspective and reflective writings. The editors selected and reproduced, in excerpt, fifteen samples of this type of literary activity, grouped according to the historical era from which the diarists wrote. 19

There are a number of specific historical topics which diaries have traditionally provided primary material for, from which researchers are able to draw conclusions. Questions relating to family, marriage patterns, child-bearing and rearing, religion, women's social connections with the church, and social relationships between women, and between the sexes, have all lent themselves well to the body of diary literature available. The relationship between diaries and religion, and between women and religion provides an excellent case in point. For example, a detailed sense of the personal and highly introspective nature of Puritan psychology has been made available through a study of their diaries. These journals were kept in

19. Conrad, Margaret, Toni Laidlaw, and Donna Smyth No Place Like Home : Diaries and Letters of Nova Scotia Women 1771-1938 (Halifax : Formac Publishing Co. Ltd., 1988)

order to capture daily emotions so that they might be reviewed and examined; however, in reality they often functioned as a "chronicle of the struggle to preserve sanity and identity."²⁰ The relationship between women's history, religion, and diaries is twofold. Many pious women were encouraged to write journals reflecting the ideals of Puritan spirituality. Ministers called on their parishioners to "compile a secret History of your Heart and Conduct."²¹ These spiritual journals allowed the writer to examine her relationship to God and evaluate her spiritual progress through self-communion.²² This form of journal writing was so common during the nineteenth century that Cynthia Huff has devoted a complete section of her bibliography to the spiritual diary.²³

These "diaries of conscience" were abundant in the Maritime region as well; as a result, religion proved to be a recurring theme in Conrad's "Archives Project" collection.²⁴ Recent studies on the Planters, pre-loyalist settlers, many of whom occupied vacated Acadian lands, also point to the relationship between early Nova Scotian journals and religious motives.²⁵ On a social level, religion was a fundamental element of the structure of women's daily lives and the community in which they lived, particularly during the nineteenth century. The church often provided the only available outlet for

²⁰ Wolfe, Cynthia Griffin. "Literary Reflections of the Puritan Character" Journal of the History of Ideas 29, 1(1968) : 13-32.

²¹ Fothergill 25.

²² Huff xxii.

²³ Huff xxiii.

²⁴ Conrad "Recording Angels " 6.

²⁵ Davies, Gwendolyn. "Persona in Planter Journals" and Allen Robertson "Methodism Among Nova Scotia's Yankee Planters" both articles found in They Planted Well : New England Planters in Maritime Canada, Margaret Conrad, ed. (Fredericton : Acadiensis Press, 1988) : 211-217 and 178-189.

women to exercise some means of access to the public sphere. The importance of this institution is a recurring theme in the analytical literature dealing with women's diaries because it is such a predominant theme in the journals themselves. Margaret Conrad summarizes this in "Recording Angels : The Private Chronicles of Women from the Maritime Provinces of Canada, 1750-1950":

The central position of religion and the church in the lives of nineteenth century Maritime women is not a distinctive trait, but it is highly significant. Religion, as we know, served both as a vehicle for resisting oppression and for encouraging equality, self-respect and public action . . . Because of the central place of the Church in Maritime communities, Maritime women are found in the very forefront of missionary work, temperance activity and moral uplift . . . 26

It is necessary to conduct an analysis of the theoretical literature on diaries that addresses issues of structure, style, and point of view adopted by the writer if we are fully to appreciate diarists and understand their motives for writing. Literary scholars have applied this theoretical approach to diaries in an investigation of the journals for their quality and artistic value. By using these criteria they are able to reveal clues to the inner motives of and influences on the diarist. Again, some of the best introductory essays on the literary value of diaries can be found in the prefaces to diary anthologies.²⁷ There is evidence of a recent upsurge of interest in the diary genre in literary circles that parallels the rise in women's studies and social history. These contemporary scholars have two primary fields of

²⁶. Conrad "Recording Angels" 22.

²⁷. See "The Diary as Literature" in Private Chronicles, 38-64, "The Diary as Art" in American Diary Literature 1620-1799, 15-29, and "The Diary as Literature" in The Diary of Samuel Pepys xcvi-cxiv.

study. Jean Rousset and his colleagues have analyzed these documents according to their readership. From this sphere of enquiry stem discussion on the differences between published and unpublished manuscripts and an interest in the audience for whom the diary was written. Also, analogous to what has occurred in the discipline of history, there has been in literature a recognition of gender as a legitimate basis from which to study form, style, and content. Some women's diaries have become recognized as having a characteristically "female" voice, with themes of love, dependence, inadequacy, and fear at the core. On the other hand, the male diary voice contains themes of the struggle for power and mastery in one form or another.²⁸ Whether we agree with these readings or not, we certainly endorse the idea that analysis of the difference between male and female diaries is a useful field of investigation.

One of the primary structural considerations raised by literary critics is the concept of an audience. Cynthia Huff, in British Women's Diaries, has termed this notion of writing for an audience as "the conscience craft of diary writing."²⁹ In an essay, "The Text and the Structure of Its Audience," Yuri Lotman asserts that any literary piece contains the image of an audience and that there is a relationship between this text and its readers which is characterized by a dialogue.³⁰ This doctrine appears to run contrary to the familiar and fundamental concept that diary writing is a private act intended

28. Spacks, Patricia Meyer. "Women's Stories, Women's Selves," The Hudson Review 30 (1977-78) : 36.

29. Huff xlii.

30. Lotman, Yuri. "The Text and the Structure of Its Audience" trans. Ann Shukman New Literary History 14 (1982) : 81.

for its creator only. Several scholars, however, have used this view of an audience in their examination of diaries and concur that, in fact, "it is not true that one writes solely for one's self." Jean Rousset applies this logic to the French style of diary writing known as the "journal intime." In his article "Le journal intime, texte sans destinataire?," Rousset constructs a typography for the diary based on the audience for which it was written. At one end of the scale are those diaries written solely for the author. At the other end appear those diaries written with publication in mind, either posthumously or while the author is living. He provides a foundation for his argument in the introspective or private character of the genre. He discerns that the essence of the diary is the contract of secrecy and that the primary audience of a text is the writer. Rousset perceives the writer and audience as one since the initial function of a diarist is to reread and reflect on past experiences, thus reinforcing the introspective trait of the genre. ³¹

Andrew Hassam, in "Reading Other People's Diaries," applies Rousset's diary typography in his discussion of the effects of publication on a private journal manuscript. This article discusses how a reader's attitudes towards a diary are altered by its publication, and what sort of work the diary then becomes. Hassam points out two significant effects that publication has on a diary :

With the diary written for publication the reader is likely to feel somewhat cheated, as though the text is less honest and the secret is suppressed. The same would be true if the diary has not been written for publication, but has been

³¹ Rousset, Jean. "Le journal intime, texte sans destinataire?" *Poétique* 56 (1983) : 435-443.

published as an edited selection. However, in the case of the publication of a complete diary which the diarist did not envisage publishing. . . the expectation of secrets revealed is tempered by the knowledge that time has made them less dangerous. . . Perhaps the most consequential effect of publication is to alter the status of the reader to that of authorized reader. I feel free to pick up the published diary precisely because it has been published. . . the violation of the secrecy clause has been performed for me by an editor.³²

The editing procedure imposed on a published diary must be examined in order to ascertain the alteration that the manuscript has undergone. Editors bring a different set of considerations to the task of revising a diary than those imposed by the author. The most respectable motive behind the abridgement of a diary is the desire to make it readable through the elimination of repetitious or stodgy material.³³ This editorial practice represents an effort to present the diary as authentically as possible, without altering the honesty and ambience of the original. However, editors have the power to create an entirely different work by extracting only the material they consider of value, thus subordinating a diary's general interest to a specialist one.³⁴ Leonard Woolf whittled his wife's journal from 26 volumes into a short book, A Writer's Diary : Extracts from the Diary of Virginia Woolf . This book contains excerpts of her diary which refer to her own writing, throwing light on Virginia Woolf's intentions, objectives, and methods as a writer. The value of this volume depends on the reader's interest in her art, not in her diary as a

³². Hassam, Andrew, "Reading Other People's Diaries" University of Toronto Quarterly 56 (1987) : 435-443.

³³. Fothergill 5.

³⁴. Fothergill 5.

whole.³⁵ Often diaries have been published privately by the family or friends as a testimonial to the author's exemplary character. In such cases the editor often expunges derogatory entries that might run contrary to the uplifting and positive personality attitude they desire to immortalize. This type of published diary has a very small and specific audience, and is not intended for a wide readership.

Hassam and Rousset introduce the notion that diaries can be classified according to the degree of readership for which they were written in their theoretical essays. These literary scholars stress that a potential diary reader must examine the motives of the diarist and determine the audience for which it was meant. Often a clue to ascertaining the intended audience is found in a preface to the document or as a dedication, or it is revealed in the opening paragraphs of a new diarist's first entries. Hassam and Rousset also discern substantial differences between the published and unpublished manuscript, recognizing the fact that publication drastically alters the "secrecy clause" of a diary, and editorial practices can completely modify the true scope of the work.

The motivation for diary writing often reveals a great deal about its creator. To this end, psychologists have employed diaries to draw conclusions about modern psychological hypotheses. For example, Bitter, Bitter Tears : Nineteenth-Century Diarists and Twentieth Century Grief Theories, edited by Paul Rosenblatt, focuses on an

³⁵. Woolf, Leonard, ed. A Writers Diary : Extracts from the Diary of Virginia Woolf (London : Hogarth Press, 1954) : vii-x.

individual's reactions to, and ability to cope with, personal tragedy as it is expressed in the subject's private journal.³⁶ Often diarists write to assuage a keen sense of loneliness or loss.³⁷ In his anthology of American diary literature, Steven Kagle devotes a complete category to those diaries which "are born of a tension, a disequilibrium in the life of its author." He terms these "Life Diaries", for which a psychological tension, regardless of its disruptive nature on the diarist's life, provides the sustaining force of the journal.³⁸

Feminist literary scholars argue that diaries are a genre of writing that women have always felt especially drawn to. Historically this forum was available to them for expression when their attempts to practise other forms of literature were considered presumptuous or silly.³⁹ Traditionally women have had limited access to resources for self-expression. One of the most ardently feminist American writers of this century, Anais Nin, maintains that diary writing is "a feminist activity, it is a personal and personified creation, the opposite of the masculine alchemy."⁴⁰ Suzanne Juhasz argues this point in "Some Deep Old Desk or Capacious Hold-All" : Form and Women's Autobiography." She unites women's work, with its pattern of

36. Rosenblatt, Paul. Bitter, Bitter Tears Nineteenth Century Diarists and Twentieth-Century Grief Theories (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1983). For a general overview of the use of diaries in the discipline of psychology see Gordon W. Allport's The Use of Personal Documents in Psychological Science (New York : Social Science Research Council, 1942)

37. Fothergill 91.

38. Kagle 17.

39. Mallon, Thomas A Book of One's Own : People and Their Diaries (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1984) : 19.

40. Spacks 35. For a comprehensive review of Anais Nin's sentiments on diary writing, its value and meaning to her as a writer, see "The Personal Life Deeply Lived" in A Woman Speaks : The Lectures, Seminars and Interviews of Anais Nin, Evelyn Hinz, ed. (Chicago : Swallow Press, 1975).

dailyness, repetitiveness, and its cumulative and cyclical content, with the diary form which focuses on the present tense and concern for intimate and domestic detail. Juhasz perceives diary writing as the opposite of "professional writing." She sees it instead as the private record of the details of personal life, and thus it provides the most appropriate model for capturing the daily experiences of women.

The male form of autobiography, she notes, reflects their socialization towards achieving a public goal rather than private experiences, and their narratives are thus generally chronological and linear.⁴¹

Patricia Meyer Spacks's article, "Women's Stories, Women's Selves," also deliberates on the different voices of men and women : "The female concern with moral issues, as manifested in diaries, insistently associates itself with women's experiential awareness of lack of freedom, lack of social power. Women display their vulnerability and convert it into their virtue."⁴² She perceives that one of the primary themes in women's journal literature is the desire to be good ; and she uses quotations from diaries to support the position that women guard popular morality, keep the rules, and preserve standards.⁴³

It is apparent from their essays that both historians and literary scholars who focus their work on the experiences of women have parallel concerns, themes, and perceptions. They concur that the distinct place that women hold in our society is reflected through their introspective and deeply intimate writings. The notion of

⁴¹. Juhasz, Susanne "Some Deep Old Desk or Capacious Hold-All": Form and Women's Autobiography " College English 39 (1978) :663-668.

⁴². Spacks 44.

⁴³. Spacks 32.

separate spheres pervades both disciplines in an analysis of women's cultural role. Just as the historical experiences of the two sexes are different, so too are their narratives. For the social historian, diaries provide an excellent primary source in their quest to provide a complete portrait of the past, one which includes the hitherto ignored majority of ordinary people. For the literary scholar concerned with form and structure, the diary provides a perfect forum because of its secret and honest nature, the same characteristics that make the ordinary person so fascinating to the social historian.

Chapter II

An Unpublished Diarist : The Case of Laura Wood

Laura Wood (née Trueman), is the first of the three Maritime diarists analyzed in this thesis. Her journal represents many of the theoretical arguments presented in the previous chapter. Her diary abounds with historical significance, furnishing insight on several levels : on a noteworthy and interesting woman, on the university-based, small-town society in which she lived, and on the priorities, moral values, and education of the thousands of Maritime women who shared her ethnic and social background during the latter years of the nineteenth century. Her diary has added historical significance since it sheds light on the early career of her husband who was to become a distinguished New Brunswick politician and statesman. Although Laura never professed to be an author and definitely did not write with posterity in mind¹, her journal has substantive artistic and structural qualities to suggest it may have been used as a literary sketch or exercise book. Laura recorded her thoughts in a black, leather bound exercise book which has remained in her family for many generations. At one point, one of Laura's descendants had the manuscript transcribed to type; in this new format two copies of the journal have been circulated to interested family members. Thus, for family members the diary has become a well-known and readily accessible source of family history. Because the diary has survived the test of time, it now acquires a literary quality that it was not considered to have originally. It has never been published, and is unedited. As

¹. Oral interview with Laura's granddaughter, Pam Black, July 1987

Fothergill puts it : "Recognition as a work of literature is most likely to be accorded to the humblest and least pretentious writing, the meek, as so often, inheriting the earth." "The true diarist," Fothergill continues, "immersed in the eddies of his days and ways, innocently dashes down whatever comes into his head and all unknowingly fashions a masterpiece."²

Laura Sophia Trueman was born on January 14th, 1856. She was a descendant of the Trueman family which first settled in the small New Brunswick- Nova Scotia border community of Point de Bute late in the eighteenth century, after emigrating from Yorkshire in 1775. Laura's ancestors boasted several generations of successful farmers, each of whom was taught that "manual labour was honourable, and that agriculture was worthy of being prosecuted by the best of men."³ In 1788 the first Methodist church in Canada was built at Point de Bute, with William Trueman, Senior as one of its trustees.⁴ When Laura married Josiah Wood in January 1874, at the age of eighteen, she brought a strong sense of family honour, honest living, and devout Methodism to her new home.

Laura and Josiah Wood lived in Sackville (approximately 10 miles from Pointe de Bute), where Josiah's family had been respected

². Fothergill, Robert. Private Chronicles : A Study of English Diaries (London : Oxford University Press, 1974) : 39.

³. Trueman, Howard. The Chignecto Isthmus and Its First Settlers (Toronto : William Briggs, 1902) : 167.

⁴. Norrie, Margaret. "George Johnstone Trueman" unpublished B.A. thesis, Mount Allison University, 1954 : 3.

citizens for many years. By the early 1870s Josiah had already attained the status of a wealthy and prominent New Brunswick merchant, following in his father's footsteps. After their marriage he turned his attention to politics, and in 1882 was successful in ousting the long-standing "Lion of Westmorland," Albert Smith, from the provincial seat in that year's federal election. After a long and respected political career, Josiah Wood was appointed Lieutenant Governor of New Brunswick in 1912.⁵ As a young politician, and later as a member of the federal cabinet, Josiah spent a great deal of his time away from their family home.

Dean Jobb has argued that Josiah Wood was an influential nineteenth century New Brunswick entrepreneur and politician worthy of a biography. To this end Mr. Jobb included four selections from Laura's diary in the chapter which recounts Josiah's life during the years of his first successes in provincial and federal politics. The results are striking. This is a chapter in which Josiah is animated, his portrait most vital and complete.⁶ Laura shared in this political history, and had her own perceptions of it.⁷ For example :

Wood displayed a certain reluctance to enter the [political] race, despite his widespread support. In his acceptance speech he was extremely modest. . . . Laura Wood also greeted her husband's nomination with some hesitation. "I am proud of the preferment [sic] shown him, but I am

⁵. For a complete biography of Josiah Wood's political and business career see Dean Jobb, ed. "Josiah Wood [1843-1827] : "A Cultured and Honoured gentleman of the Old School" Unpublished B.A. thesis, Mount Allison University, 1980., as well as Jobb's "Sackville Promotes a Railway : The Politics of the New Brunswick and Prince Edward Railway, 1872-1886" in People and Place : Studies of Small Town Life in the Maritimes Larry McCann ed. (Fredericton : Acadiensis Press, 1987) : 31-56.

⁶. Jobb "Josiah Wood" 50-75.

⁷. Strouse, Jean in her "Semiprivate Lives" Studies in Biography Daniel Aaron ed., (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1978) discusses the role of diaries in the relationship between public and private worlds.

sorry to have him go into politics, as it is I wish earnestly that he shall get his election." . . . The task of defeated Smith still lay ahead. Assisted by Harry Powell, a young Sackville lawyer, Wood campaigned throughout the country. . . Even Laura contributed to the campaign. "Had to buy three awful door-mats from a French woman," she complained, "because it was election times."⁸

Laura's comments on his achievements enable us to examine "two dimensions of history at once, both the public arenas of great figures and events, and the hidden dramas of ordinary private life."⁹ Her diary provides a vivid glimpse of local campaigns in provincial politics of that era, and an accurate and candid impression of some of the most active players.

Laura Wood's life was devoted to her family and her community. She was prominent in the local temperance reform association, later the Women's Christian Temperance Union. She was also an active member of the Methodist church (which became part of the United church in 1925), as well as maintaining strong ties with Mount Allison Wesleyan Institution, which both Laura and her husband attended, and where she sat on the Board of Regents for many years. In 1934 Wood was made a commander of the Order of the British Empire for her outstanding community service. At the time of her death, in 1934, at the age of 80, Wood was recognized as the "first Lady of Sackville," and one of "Mount Allison's warmest friends." The President of the university paid the following tribute :

Mrs. Wood was a woman of far more than ordinary culture and intelligence. She was a wide reader, a good conversationalist and a lover of art and music, with an

⁸. Jobb "Josiah Wood" 66-67.

⁹. Strouse 115.

almost superhuman sense of the best in literature and the arts. . . For sixty years her home had been open to students and faculty of Mount Allison 10

Laura began her journal in 1878. She was twenty-two years old, a young wife and mother of two small children. This diary provides a wonderful portrait of the private life of a young and unpretentious housewife who would in later years become a respected public figure. It also provides us with much information on her husband and family.

There are two predominant subjects in Laura's journal "of everyday affairs" that command a conspicuous amount of her time and energy. First, Laura possessed an absolute abhorrence for alcohol, and her diary reflects this devout temperance conviction. Second, her pages are overflowing with what Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has called "the endless trooping of women to each other's homes." Laura's treatment of these two subjects reflects her moral sensibility, and the societal niche that a young woman of the small-town merchant class fulfilled in the waning years of the nineteenth century in the Maritime provinces.

Throughout her life Mrs. Wood worked tirelessly for the local temperance society, and she never lost her conviction that alcohol was the root of most evil.¹¹ On March 18, 1878 she reflected on this in her diary :

If Prohibition were possible and surely it is now certain it is that half at least of the misery in the world might be

¹⁰. Saint John Telegraph, April 2nd, 1934.

¹¹. Oral interview with Mr. J. L. Black, Sackville, N.B. ,July, 1987.

prevented. How one is struck in seeing notices of crime in the newspapers at the great majority being directly or indirectly traceable to intoxication. When will this terrible evil be done away with. ¹²

Laura's sister Annie was her closest friend and confidant. Annie, too, briefly kept a journal, for the year 1871. The fact that the sisters both kept a journal underscores the commonality and acceptance of this type of literary activity for young women of their times. The two young girls shared the same convictions in regard to alcohol :

It seems to me that the masterpiece of Satan's machination is the Rum-traffic. Even in our own Sackville there are six places where the horrid beverage of Hell is sold, some people feel the strong desire to save their fellow creatures from a drunkards life and a drunkards hell, and these are working diligently...¹³

These are very strong words from two girls whose older brother, Albert -- whom they adored -- regularly "went over to Dorchester."¹⁴ In January of 1880, Laura was attending temperance meetings every night of the week which she felt were doing a great deal of good for "some nights there must of been 50 or 60 penitents. Of course we have felt very anxious for Albert but as yet the Lord has not answered our prayers in his behalf." (JEA, : 24.)

Laura was one of those women imbued with the nineteenth century Victorian reform impulse. Her desire to help those less fortunate was genuine, founded in her Methodist convictions and outgoing nature. One night as she filled the pages of her journal,

¹², Wood, Laura "Journal of Everyday Affairs" hereafter referred to as (JE) : 4.

¹³, "Annie Trueman's Journal, 1871" Public Archives of New Brunswick file no. MS6 611 found in the "Wood Papers" MC218

¹⁴, Dorchester is a small community adjacent to Sackville, where the roadhouse held a reputation as a popular watering hole for the young men of the area.

Laura recalled a conversation she held earlier that day with a Mrs. Harrison : "She was telling me that she reads to a Mrs. Albert Black every Sunday afternoon. I want to read to some poor bedridden woman and she was telling me of a Mrs. Riley that needed looking after. I must go and see her."(JEA, : 26.) Laura's diary furnishes a depth and sincerity to the reform impetus embodied in so many nineteenth century women with similar educational and social backgrounds.

Reading her journal, there is no doubt that Laura's world was one of close female relationships. Although she loved her husband, he was very often away, and a much greater portion of Laura's time was spent with her sister, mother and a wide circle of female friends. One night before bed Laura wrote about a large funeral she had attended that afternoon. She reflected that the woman was "ready for a brighter home" since all her children had families of their own and thus " Her home -- her sphere of usefulness was dissolved -- and she was ready for rest."(JEA, : 10.) Although Laura recognized that a woman's primary role was that of wife and mother, she did not limit herself to an exclusively domestic existence. Laura's diary chronicles her extensive work in organizing a Mount Allison women's alumnae society, various church groups and, of course, temperance groups. The continuous community work observable in her journal represents a transition from a life exclusively based on the private sphere to one with participation in the public realm through the only socially acceptable institutions available to her. One must remember, however, that Laura was able to devote so much of herself to the

community because she had two live-in "french girls" to run her home and assist with the children. The following quotation from Laura's diary is a representative entry; it expresses concern for the town members and their news, social organizations, current issues and trends. This excerpt also projects Laura's descriptive tone and lucid style of writing :

Jan. 29th I mended and worked around the house all the morning. In the afternoon I went up to Miss Pickard's. I was the first one there and had a little session with Miss Winter, the poor thing has been sick again not with those dreadful fits but with an attack of neuralgia. Mrs. P. was serene over a \$5.00 package of seeds that had been sent to her in compliment from Vick. After a while some others gathered in and Miss Whitfield, Miss Inch, Lou, Em, Sara P., Grace Lockhart and myself composed the faithful few. I read some extracts from Julius Ceasar and Miss P. read a chapter from Prescott's Philip the Second. As they were all very late getting there it soon came tea time. After tea we discussed the matter of changing our reading to Green's short "History of the English People" and decided in favour of finishing this volume of Prescott first and then commencing Green. Miss P. then wished to know what the members of the alumnae thought about some little matters of business, and by this time it was after 7 and we hurried off as fast as possible to [a temperance] meeting. We had a very good meeting four new penitents expressed their desire to lead a new life by rising. Mr. Chapman seems much encouraged and is going to keep up the meetings all next week and indefinitely. (JEA, : 28.)

Laura's diary is an excellent source of information on nineteenth century health problems and specific women's ailments. Her reference to Miss Winter's "horrible fits," and bout with neuralgia provide us with an example of this distinctively Victorian, female nervous disorder.

The candid tone of Laura's diary is greatly enhanced by the knowledge that it was never written with an eye for future publication. Her journal has never been published and is typical of so many old journals and diaries tucked away in family trunks which, if made accessible to the public, could reveal so much about our heritage. Because the manuscript is unobtainable, the "cloak of secretness" has been maintained, the intimate nature of the genre has not been violated. From Rousset's perspective this is a diary in its purest form, the communication established between the author and herself is a closed circuit.¹⁵ Laura's first entry indicates that her writing was directed toward no one but herself, for her future recollections :

I am not going to aspire to the writing of what is called a diary and on account of this I am sorry that Josie [her husband, Josiah] brought me such a pretty book. All that I intend doing is to write down commonplaces as they occur in my everyday life especially in regard to the children, for instance. The appearance of another pearly treasure which works it's painful way into my baby's mouth, or something else as important." (JEA, : 1.)

The desire to conduct this journal writing in secret was an essential motive in Laura's work for she kept the journal hidden in her desk and clearly would have been dismayed to have someone unauthorized discover and read it. An early handwritten will and testament of hers stated that "all the remainder of contents of my desk to be burned!"¹⁶ Fortunately Laura's granddaughter saved the journal against the wishes of her grandmother, recognizing that the humble reminiscences on

¹⁵ Rousset, Jean. "Le Journal Intime, texte sans Destinataire?" Poétique 56 (1983) : 438.

¹⁶ Wood Family Papers, file no. MC218- MS17/13, Public Archives of New Brunswick, Fredericton.

the daily life of this influential woman would someday be of interest to her family and, perhaps, local historians.¹⁷

This diary was written approximately 110 years ago. Because of this Hassam's "secrecy clause" has been tempered by time. Laura Wood's contemporaries are long gone ; they cannot be injured by the revelations of her words. The following, though one of her rare severe entries, is an example of what might have hurt feelings if made public in former times :

Monday Mr. Allison brought Mr. and Mrs. Sprague. I did not expect them until Tuesday and it was pretty hard... I do not like Mrs. Sprague's expression much -- she has a face just like Lizzie Hurd, but she may have conquered the disposition that seems to be there. I think you cannot be mistaken about a face. It is surely the index to the soul. Mr. Sprague is very nice indeed. (JEA, : 16.)

Since this entry was written in 1878, there is little danger of offending Mrs. Sprague and Lizzie Hurd. Enough time has elapsed to spare any of Laura's contemporaries any embarrassment.

There are some interesting structural and stylistic properties in Laura's journal. Her diary is conspicuously absent of malice towards those people who figured most prominently in her life. Laura often mentions Mrs. and Miss Wood with whom she shares the large family home. However, her diary never reflects the animosity she feels towards Josiah's live-in unmarried aunt. In later years she wrote ;

his old maid Aunt, being afraid I would be wasteful, took the head of my house and staid with me always, she

¹⁷. Oral interview with Pam Black, Sackville, New Brunswick, July 1987.

watched Josie and I and hardly gave us one moment alone, moments that are always sweet to those who love ... I was told I was an imprudent child to wish to call anything that I did not bring to this house my own¹⁸

The absence of any of this aversion to the aunt suggests that perhaps Laura acted, as diarists often do, as an editor to her journal, erasing potentially harmful remarks. An examination of the original manuscript disputes this because additional comments, crossed-through words and phrases are not apparent. Laura's journal has not been structurally altered in the least. Perhaps she did not trust her in-laws not to snoop in a journal she wished to keep so private. This raises the likelihood that many journals were not quite as private as their authors intended them to be. The fear of uninvited readership may have acted as an editing factor.

"The tone and intent of diaries can change rapidly from humorous to solemn, as the author switches from narrating a fascinating incident to addressing God."¹⁹ Laura's journal is certainly no exception to this. Her lengthy entry on her loss of a newborn infant, and the accompanying prolonged illness is touching and sombre. This is contrasted by the often refreshingly comic allusions to her surviving children, who obviously provide Laura with an unending source of joy :

took the two children down and tried to get photos of them. In this I utterly failed, they could not be kept quiet. I got tin types of myself for the photographer's sake as he

¹⁸. "Biographical Note on Laura's Early Years in the Wood Household" Public Archives of New Brunswick file no. MC 218 Ms17/12

¹⁹. Huff, Cynthia. British Women's Diaries (New York : AMS Press, 1985) : xix.

spent the whole afternoon over the children but they were horrible as usual" (JEA, : 14.)

This is sharply contrasted by an entry one week later : "I have got the dear little chicks asleep. Oh what priceless blessings they are." (JEA, : 27.)

The tone of Laura's diary is erratic, and her entries are not daily structured. Although her manuscript does contain a vast range of emotions, it quickly becomes apparent that most of the entries are written while her husband is away and Laura is alone in their rooms. From this we can perceive that as a young woman Laura was often lonely during her husband's very frequent absences. The endless social engagements of a political wife are treated with much more humour and joy when Josiah is present to share activities with her. The two excerpts below, only days apart, highlight Laura's acute awareness of Josiah's frequent absences.

"Josie will be very busy until the election is over- scarcely has time to speak to me.", (JEA, : 12.) and "On Monday Mr. Allison brought Mr. and Mrs. Sprague. I did not expect them until Tuesday and it was pretty hard. However to my great relief they had taken dinner at Moncton, Josie went away early Monday morning to Baie de Verte so I knew I should have their visit all to myself." (JEA, : 16.)

Josiah Wood was not an easy man to live with. His strong sense of morality, combined with a pious and authoritative nature, allowed little room for sympathy towards those closest to him. Laura wrote to release some of the frustrations of living with such a "cultured and honoured gentleman of the Old School"²⁰ :

²⁰. Jobb, Dean "Josiah Wood"

We have been passing through deep waters in regard to Albert. He has left Geo. Ford's and is now in Baie de Verte gunning. Pa is very much broken down and we have all felt dreadfully. In addition to this Josie said something very hard to Pa in regard to his bile and that added another drop to his cup of bitterness. I never can tell what is the reason, but Josie is not so hard to anyone else in the world as he is to my poor father or any of my relatives. It always hurts me so. (JEA, :11)

Laura Wood's diary is rich in tone and quality. Her manuscript is valuable for both the historical and literary attributes it possesses. Structurally, it represents an example of the countless unpublished manuscripts that act as a narrative of their authors' lives and surroundings expressed with a frankness found only in the secret nature of the genre. Laura unknowingly provides us with a glimpse of a vanished era. Historically, the manuscript recreates late Victorian society as it was fashioned by Maritime realities from the perspective of an active participant. This was a time of great change. It was a world that differed culturally from our contemporary one. Religious beliefs, infant mortality, funeral practices, the use of hospitals, and many other customs were quite different from current practices.²¹ Laura witnessed the rise of the industrial age as it was personified in the small New Brunswick town. Her unsuspecting comments on the coming of the railways and her husband's involvement in a sugar refinery reflect the external dynamics that constituted the backdrop to her immediate world of family, friends, and society.

²¹ Rosenblatt, Paul. Bitter, Bitter Tears : Nineteenth- Century Diarists and Twentieth -Century Grief Theories (Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 1983) : 8.

From her diary it is apparent that Laura Wood lived a full life, carved against the backdrop of a shifting economy and an expanding public sphere for women. The next diarist also recorded the effects of economic upheaval on her family as she captured small town life during the unstable and ultimately catastrophic years of the early 1930s. Victoria Burrill Ross shared in Laura Wood's love for the small town of Sackville, New Brunswick. The published portion of her diary recalls the ten years she lived in Sackville with her husband and young family. Laura Wood was still alive, although the youthful and inexperienced young wife of her journal had given way to a matriarchal figure who achieved a social stature within the community that left most people (Victoria Ross included) quite intimidated. Victoria's diary allows us a glimpse of Laura Wood as an elderly woman, reinforcing the argument that diaries are a fundamental research tool in the exploration of our past.

Victoria Ross's insights on Laura Wood are secondary; her diary is valuable in its own right. This journal furnishes an excellent regional example of international theoretical questions concerning audience and editing procedures. It also provides invaluable insight into many historical fields : Mount Allison University at a time of great change, women's educational reform, family life and social attitudes being only a few. Finally, Ross's diary is a joy to read. Her wonderful ability to see the humour in life and commit it to paper make this diary a truly fine piece of literature.



Laura Wood circ.
1880
courtesy of the Mount
Allison University
Archives



The Wood Family
Home - Cranewood-
Courtesy of the
Mount Allison Uni-
versity Archives



Laura Wood and her daughter Eleanor
(referred to as Daisy in Laura's Diary)
circ. 1879
courtesy of the Mount Allison University
Archives

Chapter III

A Self-Published Diarist : The Case of Victoria Burrill Ross

In 1958 Victoria Burrill Ross had 1,000 copies of her diary Moments Make a Year printed in the small town of Sackville, New Brunswick. She had returned to live there shortly after her husband's death. The diary was published privately as a tribute to her husband, William Ross, for whom it had been written. His sudden death in 1957 precluded his reading the voluminous manuscript which had been intended for his eyes only. Victoria published only excerpts from her 600 pages of daily-entered manuscript which faithfully captured the ten years that the family spent in Sackville, at which time William was the principal of Mount Allison Ladies' College. The result of her endeavours is an excellent recollection of the daily life at that institution during an era marked by great change. There are two distinct themes which Victoria chose to focus on in the editing of her diary: the growth and development of her young family, and the goings on of the students and the social life of Mount Allison institutions during the prosperous late 1920s and depressed 1930s. Ross's diary is humorous and anecdotal in tone. This format is an accurate reflection of her sunny outlook on life and her ability to perceive the whimsical element in a variety of often quite stressful situations.

Victoria Burrill was born 28 January 1886 in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, the youngest of eleven children. Her father, William Burrill, was a wealthy ship chandler and ship owner, who at one point owned

seventeen vessels which operated out of that port town. Victoria later recalled these early years in a letter to her friend and pen-pal Raymond Archibald : "Dad was one of those Iron men who owned wooden ships. I arrived along with the steam-ships and was the only one of the family who didn't have my name carved on the prow of a schooner or a bark."¹ At the age of fourteen, Victoria was sent to Halifax where she studied at the Halifax Ladies' College for six years. It was during this period that Victoria developed her love for music and literature which would permeate her life. After her stint in Halifax, Victoria returned to Yarmouth to live with her parents. By this time she was the only child remaining at home and her independent nature asserted itself. For the next eight years Victoria often travelled alone between Yarmouth and Boston to shop for clothes and to attend the best concerts of the day. It is said that she had a permanent reservation at the Parker House hotel in Boston during this period. Victoria's parents owned the first touring car in the province, and she often chauffeured them around, making her certainly one of the first woman drivers in Nova Scotia.

On 1st September, 1915, at the age of 28, Victoria Burrill married William Ross, a young Presbyterian minister in Amherst, Nova Scotia. During the First World War, William was stationed with the YMCA and travelled on the troop transport ships which regularly crossed the Atlantic Ocean. Victoria and her two children, Audrey and William, joined her husband in England for a year at the end of the war. Shortly after this, William Ross became the principal of the

¹ Letter from Victoria Ross to R. Archibald, 4 November, 1954, Mount Allison University Archives file no. 5501 6/6.

Presbyterian Boys School in Pictou (connected with Pictou Academy), where the family remained until the church union of 1925, at which time William Ross became affiliated with the United Church. This necessitated his resignation from the Pictou school, and he then accepted a position at Mount Allison Academy. In 1926 he became the principal of the Ladies' College where he remained for ten years. By this time Victoria had five young children and soon found herself the warden to another 100 or so young women.

Throughout her life Victoria Ross displayed an independence of character. Her love for art, literature, and especially music, extended beyond the finishing school training she received. She never took part in the expected drawing room activities such as knitting or crocheting and sewing, preferring instead golf and bridge games. Although she chose to center her life around her family and home, she sympathized with the true feminists of the day. She was never active in any feminist organizations but firmly believed that a woman could do anything if she put her mind to it. She encouraged the young women at Mount Allison who strove for academic excellence and careers in the public domain, even though, as a minister's wife, she chose a more traditional role for herself. Victoria had a wonderful relationship with her husband. They truly complemented each other, and her diary acts as a testimonial to this mutual respect and commitment. William Ross died in 1957, Victoria followed 14 years later when she was 84. Her last years were spent in St. Andrews, New Brunswick, where two of her sons and nine grandchildren lived. She was blind for most of these last years, yet

was able to carry on her correspondence by teaching herself to type. Victoria Ross died very quietly and peacefully in 1971, a just end for a woman who throughout her life strove to find the positive in people and events.²

Victoria Ross's diary is an excellent historical source for research into the Mount Allison Ladies' College and university. Her book relates in full detail an accurate account of the schools' activities : professional concerts, sermons, student recitals, and sporting events. She also includes anecdotes on prominent townspeople and social activities of the time. Her journal supplies a humanistic portrait of university affairs not supplied by traditional sources. Thus she provides an excellent record of life in a small Maritime university town during the roaring 1920s and the transition into the depressed 1930s.

When William Ross took charge in 1926, the Ladies' College, despite its large annual enrollments, was in a fragile condition.³ Some members of the university community were calling for a radical upheaval and restructuring of the institute. The university president, George Johnstone Trueman, recognized that the Ladies' College was acting both as a secondary school and a college, a dual aim that caused anomalies within its mandate.⁴ These structural

². All biographical information concerning the early life of Victoria Ross was furnished by her son MacGregor Ross in an oral interview, July, 1988, and from the personal correspondence between Victoria Ross and Raymond Archibald found in the Archibald Papers, Mount Allison Archives, Sackville, New Brunswick. Mrs. Ross's exemplary personality was reinforced by an interview with a Ladies' College student during the Ross's term as head of the institution. Oral interview with Gwen Black (nee MacDonald), July 1987.

³. Reid, John. Mount Allison University : A History to 1963 Volume II : 1914-1963 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984) : 83.

⁴. Reid 83-85.

considerations would prove, however, not to be the most serious difficulties the Ladies' College would soon be forced to acknowledge, for it was also experiencing these difficulties in the face of economic depression. The validity of the cultural as opposed to the literary emphasis of the girls' studies would raise serious questions during the depression years. By 1934 the future of the Ladies College was in serious jeopardy. In a special meeting on 23 May of that year, it was decided that there must be a shift towards subjects with a "vocational significance" and accordingly, many changes were implemented. At this meeting William Ross tendered his resignation.

In 1926 Ross had been given a task that would have been difficult at the best of times and was made impossible by the economic depression. His appointment represented the rejection for the time being of a scheme similar to that now being adopted, and thus a last attempt to preserve the ladies' college as a large and diverse institution. That the attempt had miscarried was not a personal failure on the part of Ross, but rather a personal tragedy in that he had seriously impaired his health through consistent and dedicated efforts to succeed in a position in which success was unattainable.⁵

William Ross's struggle for achievement in the face of an impossible situation is poignantly revealed in Victoria's diary. References such as :

Billee... met so many heart-breaking tales as he went about the province seeking pupils. As he called upon parents of potential students he realized how far-reaching were the effects of the economic depression... If troubles, personal and shared, are strengthening to the soul, Billee's must be hardening into steel. His naturally buoyant disposition is fighting hard for survival. ⁶

⁵ Reid 124.

⁶ Ross, Victoria Burdill Moments make a Year (Sackville : Tribune Press, 1958) : 147. (hereafter referred to as MMY)

emphasize the indomitable spirit of the college principal. This manuscript yields valuable insight into the struggle of one man to save the college from financial destitution through his tireless recruiting efforts.

Victoria Ross's diary provides valuable glimpses of an institution during years of great prosperity and great despair. The years that are covered in the published portion of her journal are of vast historical importance to the community she describes and reflects on. One of the best examples of this is her handling of the destructive fires that racked the Mount Allison campus in March of 1933 :

Billee's concern was in getting warm clothing on 60 boys. He and Bill⁷ began with their own clothes then went the rounds of their friends. There came literally piles of things from the town. In time all were out-fitted and very grateful. At 6 o'clock Ross⁸ appeared, worn and haggard, but in control of the situation. He had got through to every parent to assure them their boys were safe before the flash went out over the radio. His pride in those boys was good to see- their concern in his family's safety, their tireless work in salvaging and, when everything possible had been done, they gathered about him in the gym, and gave their school yell "Play up, play up and play up the game." Play up indeed ! Plenty of scope for that as they emerged from what must have been a state of shock and faced a rigid readjustment. The Dean of the male residence bore them off to supper. At 8.30 Ross had roll-call in Beethoven Hall. He found a cheerful group in motley array. All but 18 had been assured of beds and Billee offered shelter for them- indeed 18 cots had already been moved into available space and prepared. He started upstairs with, as he thought, 18 boys, but on reaching first-floor he found the number had increased to 32. So much for the preference of a female residence to that of mere males! (MMY, : 168.)

⁷. Bill is the Ross's oldest son, who was 14 years old at the time of the disaster.

⁸. Ross Flemington, the academy principal and resident faculty member who, with his wife Eileen and their young children, lost most of their possessions in the blaze.

Victoria Ross possesses the ability to find the positive in the most adverse of conditions. This optimistic tone is a constant thread throughout the diary and reflects her personality. Through careful editing by the author herself, Victoria's diary has been reduced from approximately 600 to 200 pages. Victoria enlisted the aid of her daughter-in-law, Katie, in this editing process. Katie later recalled that some of the best material was incinerated, and that the diary lost a lot of "color" in this editing process because Victoria felt restrained to publish only what was acceptable to the Sackville residents she had so candidly described.⁹ Victoria's diary was published while most of the town members mentioned in her journal were still alive. She felt constrained by this to publish only material that would not affront anybody in the small Sackville community. Despite this, the rich texture of the manuscript is not lost, although the thematic structure has been reduced. Katie recognized Victoria's descriptive talents and great ability as a story-teller.

A discussion of Victoria Ross's diary and the editing thereof would not be complete without mention of Raymond Archibald, a substantive and prolific scholar, and Victoria's "Confidant and editor in Chief"¹⁰ Raymond Archibald was born on October 7, 1875, to Mary Mellish and Abram Newcomb Archibald. He spent his early years at Mount Allison where his mother was first a Ladies College teacher and then principal of that institution. After her death in 1901, Raymond started to build a library at the Ladies College in her name. The

⁹. Oral interview with Katie Ross, MacGregor Ross's wife and Victoria's daughter-in-law, July, 1988.

¹⁰. Letter from Victoria Ross to Mrs. J.L. Black, Mount Allison Archives, file no. 7101.

primary focus of the Mary Mellish Archibald Memorial Library (MMAML) was the development of a comprehensive collection of English and American poetry, drama, and music. As the primary benefactor of this library, Archibald was successful in obtaining an extremely respected compilation of musical recordings and printed works. Much of Archibald's extensive library work was done by correspondence, during his thirty- two years as teacher and department head of mathematics at Brown University.¹¹ It was Archibald's suggestions and encouragement that spurred Victoria to edit and publish her diary. Fortunately the correspondence between Raymond and Victoria concerning this project has been preserved, and provides an excellent example of the underlying rationale for the very personal project she undertook. On October 17, 1954 she wrote to him :

Aside from the flattering comments re my journal's value to Mount Allison, your grasp of "Family", the first loyalty always, is so rewarding and stimulating. I must have painted the portraits of our children better than I realized, or else you are clairvoyant. ... [referring to her daughter Audrey's untimely death] ... I am sure I couldn't have faced my duties had it not been for Mrs. Wood.¹² With an unerring instinct she knew when the breaking point was upon me and would appear with her car insisting that we drive out on the marsh to view the sunset. Remembering all this so vividly, it seems as tho' it would only be loyal to delete the account of my first meeting with her, would you strike it out of my diary, please? Tear the page out completely - I am ashamed of it. At the time I was still under the influence of my Victorian mother's ideas of etiquette. ... "Indecretion may be the flavour of a diary" as someone has said and it can be forgiven. Senator Black

¹¹. Raymond Archibald Sketch, found in MMAML Scrapebook, Mount Allison University Archives, file number 5501 - 10/1. For a complete account of Archibald's contributions's to Mount Allison as a library benefactor, see John Reid's Mount Allison University : A History to 1963.

¹². She is referring here to Laura Wood, fifty five years after she penned her own diary.

was my bete noir - Eleanor¹³ would't appreciate my comments about him - or would she? I'll delete nothing I wrote about him or that snake in the grass Ida M. Leslie.¹⁴ She was an evil woman - it was inequitous to have her loose in a Ladies College. It isn't right to put her name on the same sheet of paper with our beloved Mrs. Wood but I must in saying that I want that early bit deleted please.¹⁵

From this quote several interesting points arise. First of all, Victoria reveals the primary motive in writing her daily journal -- to capture on paper the intimate details of her family, especially her children.

Next is her account of Mrs. Wood's compassionate personality. It is interesting that through the medium of letter writing, a genre similar to the diary in its introspective nature, we are provided with yet another perspective on a person that would not be available through traditional historical sources. Victoria's directive to Archibald to destroy a page she was unhappy with indicates the writer's role as editor and her ability to alter the manuscript to suit the audience. It was not a coincidence that she chose to modify her disclosures concerning Mrs. Wood in her correspondance with Archibald since she was well aware that Raymond and Laura had been exceptionally close friends and pen-pals for many years.¹⁶ Finally, Ross's true feelings towards Senator Black and Ida Leslie are plainly stated and shed light on their personalities. More importantly, Victoria's candid comments on these two Sackville residents do not appear in

¹³. Senator Black was an esteemed Sackville merchant and politician who married Eleanor Wood, Laura and Josiah Wood's daughter. (referred to as Daisy in Laura's diary)

¹⁴. Ida M. Leslie taught elocution at the Ladies College during the 1920s and 1930s.

¹⁵. Letter from Victoria Ross to Raymond Archibald, October 17, 1954, Mount Allison University Archives, file number 5501 -6/6.

¹⁶. Oral interview with Mrs. Gwen Black, July 1987.

the final printed version despite her initial desire not to censor her opinions.

This diary was edited and published with a specific audience in mind. Victoria wanted her children to have a record of their early years. At the inception of the diary project, only five copies were to be printed (one for each of the children, and one for Archibald for his Allisonia collection)¹⁷. Indeed, the reader is deprived of many of Victoria's most candid impressions. If we return to Hassam's typography, this journal would have the effect of making the reader feel "somewhat cheated, as though the text is less honest and the secrets suppressed."¹⁸ This is not the case, however, if the reader is fully aware of the intentions of the editor from the onset and accepts the altered diary for what it is meant to be. Fortunately, the optimistic and humorous tone of Ross's writing, indicative of her personality, is not lost in the editing procedure.

Victoria's considerable talent as a story-teller is illustrated in a series of passages concerning her son Kent, and his correspondence with the great body builder and champion of young boys, Charles Atlas. The serial began on October 7, 1932 :

Item re Kent. Sometime ago he read an ad. in which Charles Atlas offered a course in physical education, guaranteed to change the meanest weakling into a giant of strength, all for the sum of \$85.00. To our amazement the child wrote Mr. Atlas to say he was interested but could not afford to pay so much. He didn't say he was only

¹⁷. Letter from Victoria Ross to Raymond Archibald, October 2, 1954, Mount Allison Archives.

¹⁸. Hassam, Andrew. "Reading Other people's Diaries" University of Toronto Quarterly 56 3 (Spring 1987) : 438.

eleven years old. Today came a reply denoting great interest in one who aspired to become another Bernard McFadden and offering the course for \$25.00. Kent answered at once stating that \$25.00 was more than he could afford so he would forget about the whole thing. (MMY, : 150.)

On October 17, the story continues :

Today Kent had another communication from the adhesive Charles Atlas telling of his deep interest in one who wished to become a giant among men. Since the mere matter of money appeared to be the stumbling-block in achieving such an end, he would throw discretion to the winds and offer Mr. Ross his ten volumes of instruction for the sacrificial sum of \$10.00 Kent replied at once thanking him for his generosity but the sum of \$10.00 would not be available until next summer when he planned to earn it picking strawberries and running errands. Would Mr. Atlas hold to his offer next fall. (MMY, : 152.)

October 21 brought a speedy response from the Atlas headquarters :

Another letter to Kent from Charles Atlas enclosing pictures of Herculean creatures with muscles like whip cords. This time his offer is within Kent's means. The ten precious volumes may be purchased for the miserable sum of one dollar down and one dollar a month for five months. Even though this will take his entire allowance he is undaunted, saying "when I need an extra spot of money I'll earn it", We know he will too. (MMY, : 154.)

On the following February 28 Kent received his final letter from "that flexible financier", Charles Atlas, that he was sending his twelve volumes for \$1.00 down. (MMY, : 167.) The fact that it took only five days for Kent to send a letter to Ontario, and receive a response is incredulous and indicative of the postal service of the early 1930s. Also, anyone interested in the enduring popularity of Charles Atlas over the years would no doubt be intrigued by this early example of his adaptable financial system which represents one company's attempt to survive during a difficult economic period. The saga of Kent's

budding financial acumen portrays well Victoria's fluid writing style which is unhampered by her need to exclude any controversial material from the public's eye.

From those who knew her well, there is a general agreement that Victoria Ross was an intelligent and warm person. This is confirmed in what remains of the diary she kept for over 10 years. Although it has been very heavily edited and thus provides an excessively rosy portrait of her children and of community members, her descriptive talent is not lost, and the funny sketches on Mount Allison life accurately reflect her sunny disposition. Her diary provides the reader with a passionate, human perspective on historical events. Also, Victoria's love for music and art shine through on every page, reflecting the late Victorian emphasis on the "ornamental" subjects for young women's education. Her detailed descriptions of the Ladies College student recitals, art shows, and social events convince us that this emphasis was carried on well into the twentieth century.

Victoria Ross was both a prolific diary writer and a prolific letter writer. Fortunately, her private and continual correspondence with Raymond Archibald has been preserved and rests in an archival holding. These letters reveal Ross's motives for publishing an abridged version of her diary. The next diarist was also a master in the lost art of letter-writing. She too, had a great pen-pal who has preserved much of their correspondence. The relationship between diary writing and letter writing is a close one ; these "scribbling"

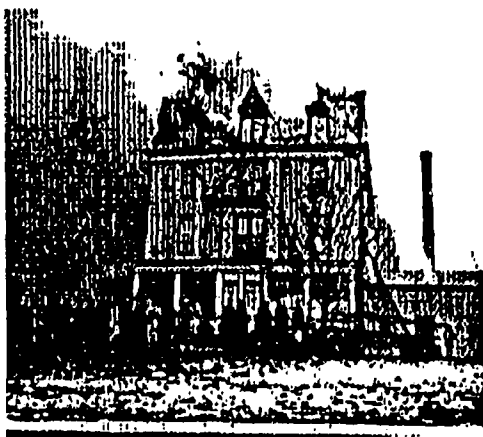
women shared in a simple love for writing, indifferent to the form it might take. Lucy Maud Montgomery was so deeply instilled with a passion for this medium that she decided to make it her career, undaunted by the many obstacles to her pursuing this career, which she would face throughout her life. In many respects her forty years of journal writing represent the pinnacle of the genre. She had literary talent which she consciously employed to capture her life and the major historical events of her day for immortality.



The Ross Family circ. 1928
courtesy William Ross, private collection



Raymond Archibald
1939
Victoria's "Editor and
Chief."
courtesy of the Mount
Allison University
Archives



Mount Allison
Academy Fire, 1933
courtesy of the Mount
Allison University
Archives

Chapter IV

The Professional Diarist : The Case of Lucy Maud Montgomery

Lucy Maud Montgomery (later wife of Ewan MacDonald) was one of a handful of Canadian authors to receive international recognition in the early years of this century. Because she became a famous writer of novels for adolescent girls, her audience demanded that she unveil her life story. Of particular interest to her followers were L.M. Montgomery's early years on Prince Edward Island, the setting for her most celebrated series of books. The existence of an autobiography and several biographical works attest to the reputation which Montgomery achieved in her lifetime and which is sustained to this day.¹ After the 1908 publication of Anne of Green Gables, Montgomery's renown isolated her from the typical middle class women of her era since, unlike the average Canadian women of her times, her experiences and reactions to the changing environment have been recorded. Until the publication of this first novel, when Montgomery was 34 years old, she was as obscure as any unrecognized author, especially a female one. Montgomery's fame increased slowly so that by 1917 there was a demand for a work like The Alpine Path (Toronto, 1917), the first autobiographical account of her career. Like Victoria Burrill Ross, Montgomery was a prolific diary writer,

¹ Lucy Maud Montgomery wrote the story of her career in a series of six installments for Everywoman's World magazine. It was later published in book form as The Alpine Path (Toronto, 1917). For the most comprehensive and up-to-date bibliographic appraisal of secondary material written about Lucy Maud Montgomery and her literature see Elizabeth R. Epperly's "L.M. Montgomery and the Changing Times" in Acadiensis 17, 2 : 177-185. Some biographies include Hilda M. Ridley's The Story of L.M. Montgomery (Toronto, 1956), Elizabeth Waterston's "Lucy Maud Montgomery" in The Clear Spirit : Twenty Canadian Women and their Times (Toronto, 1966) and Francis Bolger's The Years Before Anne (Charlottetown, 1974).

maintaining a journal almost daily for over fifty years. In recent years the first two of a projected series of five volumes of this colossal manuscript have been edited and published, to critical acclaim.² Scholars concur that her diary is her finest creation, rich in both historical and literary qualities. Like most diarists, Lucy Maud Montgomery wrote with a specific motive : her diary served as both a best friend and an emotional outlet. As a struggling professional author, she employed her journal as a practice book for developing her writing skills. Finally, when she had successfully attained her literary dreams and aspirations, the emphasis of her diary shifted as she "increasingly treated her journal as the source material for press releases and an ultimate autobiography"³ There are recurring themes in diary writings which directly relate to the frame of mind from which she most often recorded her most intimate and revealing thoughts. Although Montgomery entered the limelight of the Canadian literary world and hence the public sphere, her diary reveals a life of domesticity. Her universe is bounded by many of the same parameters as the obscure middle or upper class housewife and contains many striking similarities to her unknown sister diarists.

Lucy Maud Montgomery was born in 1874, in the small North-shore community of Clifton, Prince Edward Island. Twenty-one months later her mother died, and Lucy Maud was left in the care of

². See "Who's Afraid of Lucy Maud Montgomery?" review of The Selected Journals of L.M. Montgomery volume 1 : 1889-1910 and "Maud Montgomery's Finest Character Creation" review of Volume II : 1910-1921 both by J. M. Bumsted in Atlantic Provinces Book Review (hereafter cited as APBR) 13, 1, (February-March, 1986) : 1. and APBR 15.1, (February-March, 1988) : 4. and Margaret Conrad's "Review" in The Canadian Historical Review 67, 3 (September, 1986) : 437-438.

³. Bumsted "Who's Afraid of Lucy Maud Montgomery?" 1.

her maternal grandparents in the neighboring community of Cavendish. With the exception of a one year stint in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, to be reunited with her father and his new wife, her childhood and adolescence were shaped by the strict household of her grandparents and the rural Island community. She began writing as a very young child ; her first poem, entitled "Autumn," was written when she was only nine years old. In 1890, at just sixteen, her first published poem appeared in a Charlottetown newspaper, The Daily Patriot.⁴ From this moment on, the young writer was addicted to the gratification of seeing her name appear in print and having her work recognized. In 1893, Lucy Maud moved from Cavendish to the provincial capital of Charlottetown to attend Prince of Wales College, after which, in 1895, she continued her training in literature at Dalhousie College, Halifax. She remained in Nova Scotia for only one year because of financial constraints and returned to Prince Edward Island in 1896 to take up school teaching. This profession left her little time to practice her craft, "but for many months she worked at her writing each morning from six to seven, by lamplight, sitting on her feet to keep warm in the old farmhouse where she was boarding".⁵

In 1898, L. M. Montgomery's grandfather Macneill died, and she returned to Cavendish to take care of her ageing grandmother. Except for a brief sojourn in Halifax at a newspaper office, she remained in the isolated rural community for the next thirteen years. Her diary for these years is filled with the lamentations of a painfully

⁴. Bolger 25-27.

⁵. Waterston, Elizabeth "Lucy Maud Montgomery, 1874-1942" in L.M. Montgomery : An Assessment Robert Sorfleet ed. (Guelph : Canadian Children's Press, 1976) : 11.

lonely young woman who struggled to make a living from her pen. To this end she proved to be very successful, writing short stories and serials for many women's magazines, and by 1905 boasting earnings of "nearly \$600 last year - \$591.85 to be exact."⁶ It was during this reclusive period that Montgomery reached international fame. Her personal goals as a writer were realized with the publication of her first full-length novel, Anne of Green Gables, in 1908.

When her grandmother died in March of 1911, she became free to marry her long-patient suitor, Reverend Ewan MacDonald. Shortly after their marriage and honeymoon in Britain and Scotland, the MacDonalds left Prince Edward Island to take up residence in the Presbyterian manse in Leaksdale, Ontario. Montgomery would never reside permanently on her beloved Island again, although her subsequent novels almost always embraced the rich, beautiful setting of her childhood. Unfortunately, as the years progressed, Ewan MacDonald's mental health deteriorated alarmingly, and she felt obliged to fulfill many of his ministerial and social obligations herself in an attempt to hide his illness from the community. In 1926, the MacDonalds left Leaksdale for another Ontario charge at Norval, where they anticipated the pastoral duties would be less demanding. Reverend MacDonald was forced to resign nine years later on account of the advanced state of his chronic religious melancholia. Shortly after this, the family moved to Toronto. Montgomery pursued her

⁶. Bolger 189.

literary career in her new home at 210-a Riverside Drive which, fittingly enough, she called "Journey's End".⁷

As her diary attests, the greatest joy that Lucy Maud Montgomery's marriage sanctioned was the birth of her two sons, Stuart and Chester. The site of the MacDonald's final move was chosen because by the year 1935 both boys were at university there : Chester in the Osgood Hall law programme, and Stuart in medicine at the University of Toronto. In this same year she was honoured by being declared an officer of the Order of the British Empire, receiving official recognition as an author who had appealed to the young at heart for over fifty years. Fame, however, had its toll on her. In 1938 she suffered a serious nervous breakdown, which was followed by a complete mental collapse in 1940, from which she never fully recovered. Her terminal nervous condition is compellingly foreshadowed in her early diaries. On April 24, 1942, Lucy Maud Montgomery died suddenly at the age of sixty-seven. She was buried in her beloved Cavendish in a plot she had selected in 1923 since "it overlooked the spots I always loved, the pond, the shore, the sand dunes, the harbour."⁸ Ewan was to join her the next year. Her literary fame has continued to flourish in the decades since her death.

During her lifetime Montgomery published twenty-three books of fiction, one book of poetry, a book about courageous women and an autobiography. The fiction still sells steadily in countries as diverse as

⁷. Bolger 207.

⁸. Bolger 219.

Poland and Japan.⁹ The "Anne" series of books, which brought her first honour, have been translated into forty languages. They have spurred not only a musical, now in its twenty-third summer season at the Charlottetown Festival, but also two Hollywood films, and two extraordinarily successful television mini-series.¹⁰

Steven Kagle argues that "The life diary is often born of a tension, a disequilibrium in the life of its author..."¹¹ Lucy Maud Montgomery's daily reflections present a vivid contradiction to the glamorous image of an internationally famous Canadian author. The first two available volumes of her diary reveal an overworked, constantly tired, and often ill young woman who continuously struggles to balance her time between two or more demanding occupations.¹² Before her marriage, she laboured to improve her craft at first while maintaining a teaching position and then while taking care of her ageing and ill-disposed grandmother. After her marriage, Montgomery was often extremely frustrated by the time-consuming and tedious nature of her duties as a minister's wife, which took away from her precious hours for writing. This theme of being overworked, and the mental and physical anguish it caused, leaves a powerful and gripping impression on the diary reader.

⁹ Sorfleet, John. "L.M. Montgomery : Canadian Authoress" in L.M. Montgomery : An Assessment : 4. See also "L.M. Montgomery : at home in Poland" Barbara Wachowicz ed. in Canadian Children's Literature , 46, (1987): 7-36.

¹⁰ "The Heritage of Prince Edward Island" in Canadian Heritage 14,2,(Summer, 1988) : 23.

¹¹ Kagle, Steven. American Diary Literature (Boston : Dwyane, 1974) : 17.

¹² The ever-present theme of nervous sickness and overwhelming tiredness in Lucy's diary was discussed in a CBC radio interview with Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston, the editors of The Selected Journals of Lucy Maud Montgomery, by Peter Gzowski, July 29, 1988.

It can be argued that Lucy Maud Montgomery's diary is among the few excellent examples of a published psychological journal (or life-diary) with a Maritime regional framework. From a very early age Maud sought to release her inner tension through her private writing. In her diary unvoiced frustrations found liberation. On Saturday, December 22, 1900 she wrote :

Sometimes I am conscious of a great soul loneliness, Spiritually and mentally I have always had to stand alone, I suppose it has made for strength and self-reliance - but it is hard . . .
Now I'm off. This grumble has done me good. I work off all my revolutionary tendencies in this journal. If it were not for this "went" I might fly into a thousand little pieces someday. 13

Three years later she echoed her necessity to write as a release. She was twenty-nine years old, single, and desperately lonely when she wrote the following :

I have nothing to write about and yet I fear to stop. It seems to me I can only preserve an outward calm by writing, and if I stop a choking fit of tears and sobs will come on . . . (LMM vol.1 : 287)

After her escape from a stagnant and restrictive family home, her life no longer held the great uncertainties and fears of her first three Island decades. Her two most important dreams, literary recognition and motherhood, were to be realized ; and yet the homologous themes of loneliness, overwork and dissatisfaction with

¹³ Rubio, M and E. Waterston eds. The Selected Journal of Lucy Maud Montgomery Volume 1 : 1889-1910 (Toronto : Oxford University Press, 1985) : 255. (This journal will hereafter be cited as LMM vol. 1)

her life persisted. Montgomery's entry on August 23, 1915 underscores this theme :

I have had some bad attacks of nervous depression lately - one last night that was almost unbearable. My condition - the war news - the weather, all combined to make me very miserable. Sometimes I feel so unutterably disheartened that if it were not for Chester it seems to me I would rather not go on living. ¹⁴

The foundation for the literary value of Lucy Maud Montgomery's diary is anchored in the honesty with which she wrote. This was never sacrificed even though it becomes apparent, particularly in her later years, that she wrote with potential publication in mind.

The greatest literary character this famed Canadian author ever created was herself, and the great literary achievement of her life was the production of her journal, a conscious effort if ever there was one . . . These entries are, we are fully aware, not the casual private jottings of their accomplished author, but an attempt to engage the reader in her private and public world.¹⁵

As Lucy Maud became famous, and she came to recognize that her private writing might be of interest to posterity, her diary did not lose the frankness and spontaneity of the humbler diarist. In 1917, Montgomery wrote a history of her literary career at the request of the magazine, Everywoman's World. The editor of the magazine was disappointed that her story omitted any reference to her past love affairs. She snubbed the editor, telling him that she was not "one of

¹⁴. Rublo, M. and E. Waterston The Selected Journals of Lucy Maud Montgomery Volume II: 1910-1921 (Toronto : Oxford University Press) : 171. This journal will hereafter be cited as LLM vol.II)

¹⁵. Bumsted "Maud Montgomery's Finest Character Creation " 3.

those who throw open the portals of sacred shrines to the gaze of the crowd." (LLM vol. II : 202) A few days after this correspondence she proceeded to outline these affairs of the heart for a future audience, the unknown readers of her journal :

I was never in love with Ewan - never have been in love with him. But I was - have been- and am, very fond of him. He came into my life at its darkest hour when I was utterly lonely and discouraged with no prospects of any kind, and no real friends near me . . . I have been contented in my marriage, and intensely happy in my motherhood. Life has not been - never can be - what I once hoped it would be in my girlhood dreams.

But I write of these things not for the Editor of Everywoman's. My grandchildren may include what they like in my biography, but while I live these things are arcana. (LLM vol. II : 206)

The candid nature of Maud Montgomery's journal contradicts the premise that a reader is likely to feel cheated by a diary written with publication in mind. Certainly one does not feel the least deceived by Lucy Maud's daily reminiscences, but privileged at being allowed to share in a piece of her universe.

Montgomery's journals are filled with her reactions to the world in which she lived thus providing a wealth of primary information on several transitional decades in Canadian history. Of even greater value, her diaries provide a penetrating, thoughtful, and reflective account of Canadian life from a first-person, female perspective. Montgomery's growth as both a writer and an individual was divided into distinctive time periods. These partitions are emphasized further by the structural limitations created by publishing her on-going

personal writing. The first volume of the diary is set in rural Prince Edward Island, with Montgomery as a young woman and her writing an obscure avocation. The second volume is set in small- town Ontario; here she is Mrs. MacDonald who has her own home and family to preside over, but also has a strong role to play as L.M. Montgomery, the well- known author. The third volume promises an urban Toronto setting and an older and wiser Maud, more accustomed to her role of a celebrity.

One need only to read a few paragraphs of Montgomery's famous novels to realize the impact the rural landscape of her youth made on her imagination and art. In her autobiography she reflected :

We cannot define the charm of Prince Edward Island in terms of land and sea. It is too elusive - too subtle. Sometimes I have thought it was the touch of austerity in an Island landscape that gives it its peculiar charm. And whence comes that austerity? Is it in the dark dappling of spruce and fir? Is it in the glimpses of sea and river? Is it in the bracing tang of the salt air? Or does it go deeper still, down to the very soul of the land? For lands have personalities just as well as human beings ; and to know that personality you must live in the land and companion it, and draw sustenance of body and spirit from it ; so only can you really know a land and be known of it. ¹⁶

The predominant historical theme of the first volume of Lucy Maud Montgomery's diary is an accurate and detailed description of rural Maritime life and landscape during the waning years of the nineteenth century. She eloquently captures the small-mindedness

¹⁶. Montgomery, L.M. The Alpine Path (Don Mills : Fitzhenry and Whitehead Ltd, 1917) : 11.

and restrictive nature of the clannish rural community that dominated Prince Edward Island's social structure. Montgomery also presents the reader with a vivid portrait of the narrowly defined sphere that women of her era inhabited. As an artist, her highly developed imagination and writing skills could not find a sympathetic or encouraging home in an environment that suppressed individuality and ambition in its female occupants.¹⁷

As a young country school teacher Lucy Maud enjoyed church teas, picnics, and prayer meetings, which were very often the only social occasions for young people to meet.¹⁸ The church, in fact, was a pivotal institution for women in most small Maritime communities. Montgomery described the old church in Cavendish and its important social function :

The gallery itself was seldom used . . . only when the annual Communion Sunday came was I allowed to go up there with the other girls and I considered it a great treat, especially if we were fortunate enough to get the front seat . . . A front gallery seat was very convenient for we could take in all the new costumes and I fear we thought more about them than we did about the solemnity of the service and what it commemorated.(LLM vol. 1 : 239.)

Although Lucy Maud was a woman of strong religious convictions, her independent nature rebelled against the church's strict codes of behaviour. The church, so important in her early social life, was to continue to demand much of her precious time in the years to come.

¹⁷. See Weale. David "No Scope for Imagination" : Another Side of Anne of Green Gables" Island Magazine 20, (Fall/Winter, 1986) : 3-9, as well as Margaret Conrad's review in the Canadian Historical Review and Clifford Holland's review in Queen's Quarterly 93, 3 : 667, of LLM vol. 1.

¹⁸. Weale 8.

Montgomery's marriage to a country pastor cemented these bonds. She foreshadowed this intellectually circumscribed existence days after her engagement :

Neither had I the least hankering to be a minister's wife. The life of a country minister's wife has always appeared to me as a synonym for respectable slavery -- a life in which a woman of any independence in belief or character, must either be a failure, from an "official" point of view, or must cloak her real self under an assumed orthodoxy and conventionalism that must prove very stifling at times.
(LLM vol. 1 : 321)

Throughout the second volume of Lucy Maud Montgomery's diary the predominant historical theme shifts away from her reactions to the rural landscape and focuses more intently on the external environment of world politics. Montgomery's analysis of the events of World War I fill the pages of her diary for four years, and are "perhaps the most useful first-person account in existence of the view from the Canadian 'home front' during this period."¹⁹ She captured those painful years on paper with an unparalleled and tortured emotion :

I wonder if there has ever been a week in the history of the world before into which so much searing agony has been crammed . . . I was busily preparing dinner when I heard Ewan say "Do you want to hear the latest news from the front?"

Something in his question or the tone of it filled me with dread. I snatched the letter . . . It said, simply and boldly, that the latest dispatches had stated that the British line was broken and that the German shells were raining on Paris . . .

I went all to pieces -- I was nothing but a heap of quivering misery. If the Germans were shelling Paris they must have crashed through everywhere and be at its very gates ! Paris

¹⁹. Bumsted "Maud Montgomery's Finest Character Creation" 4.

was lost -- France was lost -- the war was lost! (LLM vol. II : 243).

Montgomery's vivid and detailed reaction to the events of World War I served two purposes. She was able to recognize the significance of the global events she was reacting to, and her careful attention to them suggests that she perceived a larger potential audience for her diary. The reader is aware that she took great care to insure that her diary became "the record she chose to leave for posterity of her life and testimony . . . she wanted us to see her world on her terms."²⁰ Montgomery has quite consciously left us a valuable account of a momentous episode in world history, especially meritorious for its unique merge of Canadian, female, emotional, and literary perspectives. But, by focusing her attention on her personal responses to world affairs, Maud MacDonald's unhappy home life could remain a secret. Because of her concern about the war she was not compelled to transcribe the stagnant social world of a minister's wife which she had accurately feared before her marriage. The theme of domestic discord would surface with increasing regularity after the war and as Ewan MacDonald's mental health deteriorated.

A discussion of the thematic essence of the second volume of Montgomery's journal would be incomplete without mention of the dramatic relationship between the author and her cousin, Frederica Campbell (Macfarlane). Their intense, almost spiritual, friendship gives credence to Carrolle Smith-Rosenberg's argument that the

²⁰. Bumsted "Maud Montgomery's Finest Character Creation" 4.

"emotional ties between nonresidential kin were deep and binding and provided one of the fundamental existential realities of women's lives."²¹ In the same pages Rosenberg further argues that these relationships assumed an emotional centrality in the lives of the women involved. Certainly the focus of Montgomery's journal is not on her relationship with her husband, but on that with her closest friend. One of the longest diary entries of the second volume recalls, with poignant clarity, the last few days of Frederica's life. The passage is exceptionally moving, and terribly sad. Montgomery's literary talent is never more acutely felt :

Her breath grew shorter and shorter. At seven it ceased. She died as peacefully as a tired child might fall asleep. *She died.* And I live to write it! Frede is *dead*. "After life's fitful fever she sleeps well." But *I* wake and must face the dreary years without her. I *must* live as long as I can for my children's sake. I must live -- without that blithe comradeship, that intellectual companionship, that faithful, earnest friendship - live, knowing that Frede will never come again under my roof - that never again will come to me a letter addressed in her old familiar hand - that I will never hear her laugh - never save up a joke to tell her - never walk with her again under the Park Corner birches or over the old bridge in the summer twilight ! How *can* I go on living when half my life has been wrenched away, leaving me torn and bleeding in heart and soul and mind. I had *one* friend -- one only -- in whom I could absolutely trust -- before whom, I could in Emerson's splendid definition "think aloud" -- and she has been taken from me. Truly, as has been said, in such an instance as this "it is the survivor who dies". Yes, Frede, you did not suffer the pangs of death. It was *I* -- *I* -- as *you* would have suffered had it been I who went away!

She died just as the eastern sky was crimson with sunrise. She "went out as the dawn came in" -- like old *Captain Jim* in my *House of Dreams*. When I realized that she was dead

²¹ Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll "The Female World of Love and Ritual : Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America " *Signs* 1, 1, (1975): 11-13.

I stood up -- I felt Miss Hill's arms around me -- I heard her whisper at my ear, "Look at the sunrise -- look at the sunrise." It was one of those absurd things people say, in a desperate effort, I suppose, to be kind and inspirational. I could have shrieked with derision at it. The sunrise had no message for me. I went out of the room with an unbearable agony tearing at me. Tears had ceased to flow and I had not that relief. If I had been alone my anguish would have found vent -- and so relief -- in screams. But I must not scream out of consideration for the others there. I crushed back the impulse to shriek -- I went into another room and sat down on the bed. Suddenly I found myself laughing. In a moment my hysterical peals of laughter were ringing through the hall. (LLM vol. II : 295)

Lucy Maud Montgomery's fiction has often been dismissed by literary critics. Desmond Pacey, in Creative Writing in Canada (Toronto, Ryerson, 1952) best summarized this attitude : "Anne of Green Gables is a children's classic, and it would be silly to apply adult critical standards to it . . . It had all the features of the kind of escape literature which a materialistic and vulgar generation craved . . ."22 The publication of the first two volumes of Montgomery's private journal have spurred an opposite reaction from literary critics and historians. In fact, the reviewers of Rubio and Waterston's edition of the journals are unanimous in their praise of the author's diary writing skills as well as the literary and historic value of her subjective material. In several instances the reviewers suggest that these diaries are worthy of further critical analysis. Certainly this case study can only glance at a few of the multitude of interesting and worthy topics the journals address. Montgomery's personal development from a young and carefree girl into a thoughtful writer fascinates the diary reader. Her metamorphosis from rural

22. This and other critical arguments on Montgomery's fiction are cited in Elizabeth Epperly's "L.M. Montgomery and the Changing Times" 177-179.

innocence to urban sophistication is set against a backdrop of a nation undergoing much the same process.



The Rev. Ewan
MacDonald circ. 1906
courtesy The Selected
Journals of L.M. Mont-
gomery volume 1.



Lucy Maud Montgomery
circ. 1919
courtesy The Selected
Journals of L.M. Mont-
gomery volume 2.



Frederica Campbell circ. 1918
courtesy The Selected Journals of
L.M. Montgomery volume 2



Lucy as a little girl circ. 1884
courtesy The Selected Journals
of L.M. Montgomery volume 1

Chapter V

Conclusion

The profile which we can develop from these three examples is of a diarist who had an education, enough leisure time, and enough money to provide herself with the necessary materials to jot down her daily events. Laura Wood, Victoria Ross, and Lucy Maud Montgomery shared a strong sense of community, reflective of the Maritime region. They also shared in the many comforts associated with an upper middle class neighbourhood. If we are to draw some general conclusions in regard to the distinct niche women have occupied in shaping the culture of this region from the personal writing they have left behind, then we must extend our research beyond the small- town community to the agrarian landscape and our rural ancestors.

Although rare, there are a few examples of diaries written by rural women that have achieved publication. These works provide us with a different perspective in the study of female diaries. These are the truly obscure diarists ; the patterns of their work and leisure time have not been substance for biography or textbook. Because of their humble roots and their unaffected style of writing, these women have been systematically ignored. The value of these farm diaries can not be underestimated. Diaries and journals are one of the only sources that provide an accurate record of the important occurrences and events in the lives of our rural ancestors.

Ironically, the lack of interest in these farm women was unwittingly, yet poignantly, highlighted by the scholar who brought one of the first female diaries in the region to publication as a historical document. Susan Dunlap's sixty years of faithful diary writing appeared in the Dalhousie Review in 1966, on "the cutting edge" of the new historical analysis which focused on the ordinary folk, the farmers and labourers, to name just a few. Campbell summarized what he perceived to be the significance of Susan's diary and concluded with :

Susan kept a diary for sixty years. A farmer's daughter, she in turn became a farmer's wife and the mother of farmer's sons. As such, she had a sturdy faith, and was finely attuned to cosmic stirrings - weather, the changing seasons, the surge of growing things, the cycle of death and renewal. But in her Diary she chose to record the timeless trivia of a women's days . . .¹

Although Campbell was eager to embrace the doctrines of a new social history, he obviously was not prepared to shed the age-old assumption that the core of women's existence was not comprised of much more than "timeless trivia". The rise of women's studies in conjunction with this new historical perspective is reflected in the few samples of female farm diaries that have emerged in the Maritime region within the last two decades.²

The structure and style of the farm women's introspective writing reflects the rigorous realities of rural life. As the women

¹. Campbell, G.G. "Susan Dunlap : Her Diary" Dalhousie Review 46 (Summer, 1966) : 222.

². For example : In 1815, a young farm girl Louisa Collins wrote a diary. This diary has now been published twice in as many years, first in Margaret Conrad's No Place Like Home : Diaries of Nova Scotia Women 1771-1938, (in 1988) and by the Nova Scotia Museum Complex (in 1989).

recall daily farm routines, their diaries tend to be more methodical and repetitious than their more worldly sisters. Almost without exception every entry penned by Mary Smith, of Smithville, Inverness County, Cape Breton Island, and Susan Woodman of Alberton, Prince Edward Island, commences with a weather report for that day. This systematic format distances the reader from the diarist and invokes an impression of impersonality. If we refer back to the distinctions between the diary and journal then these farm chronicles take on the "more formal, book of observations" characteristics of the journal.³

Physical realities for the rural female diarists were much more severe than for their more urbanized counterparts. For these women especially, the weather played a pivotal role in many aspects of their lives, and their chronicles are permeated with details concerning the weather and its impact on the day's events. On December 1st, 1880 Mary Smith wrote :

a dreadful gale rained all the forenoon in torrents then turned into a real old fashioned snow storm. Blew the top off the kitchen chimney and nearly carried the porch away.⁴

Later that winter she remarked " a very cold Morning last night the coldest we have had all winter the water was frozen in the pot on the cooking stove this morning no one from here went to church . . . ⁵

³. Cummings, James. "Preface" American Diaries : an Annotated Bibliography of Published American Diaries and Journals, volume 1 : Diaries Written from 1492-1844 Laura Arksey, Nancy Pries, and Marcia Reed eds. (Detroit : Gale Research Co., 1983) : vii.

⁴. "Diary of Mary Smith of Smithville : 1890-1892" Cape Breton Magazine 41 : 48.

⁵. "Diary of Mary Smith" 50.

In rural communities the weather had the ability to completely immobilize whole families and manipulate work schedules.

Despite the tangible differences between the rural and urban diarist, these farm women echo many of the themes we have already examined. Strong female bonds and endless visiting were not restricted to the middle class townsfolk. In 1890, when she was seventy-eight years old, Mary Smith recalled a typical day :

a fine day pretty bright but cold this is Maggie Beatons wedding day Sarah bakeing and doeing housework did not put the cloaths out it is too frosty Flora spinning the children at school Lewis went to Broad Cove to try and collect some money the teacher went out to temperance meeting last evening. Lewis got home a little after dark and did not have much luck colecting a little after he got home Mrs. Isaac came on a visit and her five youngest children so there was tea to get for all hands they did not get away till after ten Harriet said that there is no crossing over Port Hood harbour the big ice has not come in yet . . . 6

The large extended family is characteristic of rural life, and the comings and goings of family and friends is a predominant focus for these female diarists.⁷

The dominant and recurrent theme in the diaries of Maritime women, regardless of the cultural landscape from which they wrote, is the fundamental priority of their family and homes. On a social level the internationally renowned Lucy Maud Montgomery and the anonymous Mary Smith of Smithville are worlds apart. Yet each

6. "Diary of Mary Smith" 48.

7. Weale, David ed. "Diary of Susan Woodman" Island Magazine 3, (Fall/Winter, 1977) : 23.

woman chose to fill the pages of her intimate journal with the events of her immediate domestic circle of children and female friendships. Both women permit the reader a glimpse into the daily routines and priorities which constitute the fabric of their lives. Their diaries reflect a distinct women's culture, rooted in a broad range of customs, repeated over a lifetime.⁸ These customs are characterized by patterns of cyclical dailyness, filled with repetitive domestic rituals, which are expressed through an identifiably female voice.⁹

This "women's culture", as it has been shaped by Maritime realities, transcends classification by academic discipline. Feminist scholars, regardless of the methodological framework from which they base their research, acknowledge this separate niche women have filled in the development of our region. They agree that an awareness of the private sphere, the world that Laura Wood, Victoria Ross and Lucy Maud Montgomery bring to life in this study, is absolutely necessary if we are to fully understand the dynamics that have influenced the creation of our present society.

The responses to this limited reality that these diaries capture are as diverse as the personalities of the authors themselves. Victoria Ross's diary is a daily testament to the joys of motherhood, church and the small-town social world. The pages of her diary are filled with

8. From the introduction to Rethinking Canada : The Promise of Women's History V. Strong-Boag and A.C. Fellman eds. (Toronto : Copp Clark Pittman, 1986) : 3.

9. See Susanne Juhasz's "'Some Deep Old Desk or Capacious Hold-All' : Form and Women's Autobiography" College English 39 (1977-78) : 663-668, and Margaret Conrad's "'Sunday's Always Make Me Think of Home' : Time and Place in Canadian Women's History" in Rethinking Canada : The Promise of Women's History Veronica Strong-Boag and Anita Clair Fellman eds. (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1986) : 67-82.

"whimsy, humour, and graciousness" (MMY, : 91). Her private moments, used to record the day's events, were a time to reflect, enjoy and relax. In stark contrast, Montgomery was acutely aware of the restraints imposed upon her naturally curious and questioning spirit by family duty and obligation. She became bored and discontent in Cavendish, despite her deep love for the beautiful countryside. Her journal provided an escape from the confines of family and the suffocatingly circumscribed nature of rural society. She wrote to vent an inner pain, and the spirit of her diary, the first volume especially, is often strained, dark, and depressed. If these two diaries represent the opposite ends of a scale that records women's contentedness with the predetermined realities imposed on their roles in Maritime society, then Laura Wood would fall somewhere in the middle. Her diary distills a sense of contented well-being, tinged with frustration. Writing as a young wife, she records the comforts as well as the restrictions associated with her newly acquired status as a fledgling member of a small-town aristocracy.

If the voice from which each of these women recorded the passage of their lives can be placed upon a scale, then, so too, can each author's perception of herself as a diarist and editor. Laura Wood's diary is most true to the fundamental nature of the genre. It has never been published, its secret essence is untouched by an impersonal editor. Laura did not perceive herself as a writer, and any editing she may have done represents an unconscious defense against potential spies. At the other extreme, the first volume of Lucy Maud Montgomery's diary was released nationally just in time to capitalize

on the lucrative Christmas season in 1985. This is a "splendidly produced and packaged"¹⁰ work, with a large international market. There is no doubt that the two Waterston and Rubio volumes presently available underwent many editorial reviews before reaching publication. Montgomery became conscious of her role as the original editor of this diary as her international fame increased. Her diary was transformed from a best friend and catchall for uninhibited emotional outpourings, to a cultivated record of her life for a future audience. Despite this awareness Montgomery did not sacrifice honesty in her personal writing, and the diary does not suffer for it. This cannot be said of Victoria Ross's diary. In this case the author acted as both editor and publisher. She felt constrained to omit any reflections which might prove controversial to the small town she addressed in her diary. The reader is left with a sense that something is missing, and that the diary has lost some of the honesty fundamental to the genre. The reader must accept the motives of the author and appreciate the diary for what is it, a living testimony to one person's, one family's, and one institution's struggle against the destructive powers of the great depression.

Endeavors to raise women's diaries from obscurity have been long and arduous and are no by means complete. For example, the journals that rural women have left for posterity deserve a much closer and detailed analysis. Any of the three case studies in this paper merit further treatment, for both the literary and historical value they hold. The limited emergence of these Sackville, New Brunswick

¹⁰ Bumsted, J.M. "Maud Montgomery's Finest Character Creation" *APBR* 15,1 (Feb./March, 1988) : 1

diaries and the international recognition of a book like L.M. Montgomery's, however, shows the potentially high value of the records that women have kept of their culture and the wider human culture.

Appendix

**Male Published Diaries
of the Region**

Preface : This list of published male diaries from the Maritime region reflects research done at the commencement of this thesis, and does not claim to be definitive. Some of the citations represent diary or journal excerpts that appear in a larger work. Others, which first appeared in William Matthews's Canadian Diaries and Autobiographies (Los Angeles, 1950), are quite obscure and may not be complete. This list is intended only to give the reader an impression of the nature of the male diaries from the region that have achieved publication and to serve as a starting point for further research.

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Anon., An Authentic Account of the Reduction of Louisbourg 1758 (London, 1758)

Anon., An Emigrant's Journal : Adventures in Canada (London, 1851)

Baglole, Harry and Ron Irving eds., The Chappell Diary : a Play of Early Prince Edward Island (Charlottetown : Ragweed Press, 1977)

Bailey, Jacob, Frontier Missionary (Boston, 1853)

Bell, D.G. ed., Newlight Baptist Journals of James Manning and James Innis (Hantsport : Lancelot Press for Acadia Divinity College and Baptist Historical Committee, 1984)

Beaudoin, Jean, Les Normands au Canada (Evreux, France, 1900)

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Dewar, L. George M.D. ed., Hernewood : The Personal Diary of Col. John Hunter Duvar : June 6 to September 17, 1857 (Summerside : Williams and Crue, 1979)

The Diary of Simeon Perkins, (Toronto : Champlain Society, 1948-1978)

Diary of William McDougall : A Journal of Travel Between New Brunswick Canada and the Northwest Coast of America 1868-1872 (Sussex, New Brunswick : *The Caledonian*, 1977)

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Ganong, William ed., "Journal of Captain William Owen" New Brunswick Historical Society Collections 1, II (1896) :193-221.

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Hill, M. and E. Hill comp., The Journal of Captain Goerge McAllister 1831-1833 (St. Stephen : New Brunswick, Courier Press, 1931)

Hurst, John Fletcher comp., The Journal of Captain William Pote, Jr. 1745-1747 (New York : Dodd, Meade and Co., 1895)

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MS17 /13 - Laura's Will

MS17 /31 - Laura Wood Papers "Miscellaneous Notes"

MS26 /17 - Wedding Invitation

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Raymond Archibald Papers file number 5501 -
 #6/6 Victoria Ross Correspondance
 #10/1 Mary Mellish Archibald Memorial Library Scrapebook
 #12 Historical Material / History of Mount Allison
 Mrs. J.L. Black/Victoria Ross Correspondance file number 7101
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