



**LUND UNIVERSITY**  
Humanities and Theology

## **The Rebellious Child**

**L.M. Montgomery's use of *Emily of New Moon* and *Emily Climbs*  
to subject absolute authority of adults over children to scrutiny**

*“For the moment they faced each other, not as aunt and niece, not as child and adult, but as two human beings [...].” (L. M. Montgomery, *Emily of New Moon*)*

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## Introduction

Lucy Maud Montgomery was a Canadian author who wrote novels for children and adults at the beginning of the 20th century. She was born in 1874 in Clifton, Prince Edward Island, and died in 1942 in Toronto. In most of her writing Montgomery used the colorful scenery of the place where she was born, Prince Edward Island, a beautiful small island on Canada's eastern coast. Montgomery's most famous work is without a doubt the *Anne of Green Gables* series, which contains seven volumes. The first novel was published in 1908 and was very much appreciated by readers right from the beginning. Montgomery produced more than 20 novels and a great number of short stories and poems. Her work was appreciated in international circles, and several of her short stories and novels, including the whole of the *Anne of Green Gables* series, have been translated into other languages.

I first encountered Montgomery's creations as a child, watching the television adaptations of *Anne of Green Gables*. The innocent and uncorrupted way of life that was described by Montgomery from a child's point of view, was probably what spurred my interest and led me to Montgomery's stories. Although I appreciate the *Anne of Green Gables* novels, my favorite among Montgomery's work is the *Emily of New Moon* series. The story about Emily is quite similar to the story about Anne in many ways. The protagonist in both cases is an orphan girl, and the setting is on Prince Edward Island. *Emily of New Moon* tells us the story of Emily Byrd Starr, who has lost her father to tuberculosis, and is taken care of by her mother's family, the "proud Murrays." It depicts her life on the family farm, New Moon, and the struggles she has with her situation as a dependant. Emily finds new friends, including a best friend named Ilse and two boys, Teddy and Perry, with whom the two girls play. Together they find an outlet for their imaginations.

Imagination and fantasy are two very important constituents of the story. Emily is born with the itch to write, and her development as a poet and author is a very important element of this story. It is also the main characteristic that *Emily of New Moon* and its sequels do not have in common with the *Anne* novels. Ann S. Cowan points out that "Montgomery tempers the romantic fantasies [...] with autobiographical notes from the life of a struggling young writer", and also comments that it is "[b]ecause of their autobiographical nature, [that] the 'Emily' books hold a special interest for Montgomery's readers" (44). They tell a story of the transformation of a small child with a vibrant and vivid imagination to a grown woman,

author and a poet. This is one of the characteristics of the story about Emily that appeals the most to me, and it is probably the reason why I prefer it from the story about Anne.

One of the main traits of Montgomery's stories that has incited my interest the most, is the way she describes the lives of children. However, her novels do not follow the strict structure of earlier literature that was so strongly influenced by Puritan and Victorian values. The children in her novels rely on their own struggle for development and growth instead of relying on adults to provide them with the basis for development. This is most evident in the story about Emily, particularly in *Emily of New Moon* and *Emily Climbs*, since they tell the story of Emily's childhood. The aim of this essay is, therefore, to show that Montgomery in these novels has focused on telling the story of a child's struggle to grow and gain independence against the absolute authority of adults. Rather than giving moral lessons to her adolescent readers, as was common in earlier literature, Montgomery focuses on including moral lessons for adults in their conduct with children. This will be presented by examining firstly, the situation of children in general in Victorian society and common traits of Victorian literature. Secondly, Emily's situation as an orphan and her relationship with Aunt Elizabeth and Aunt Ruth will be analyzed. Finally, Emily's, Ilse's, and Perry's rebellious streaks will be studied and compared to the Victorian and Puritan understanding of what a rebellious child was.

## **Childhood in Victorian and Puritan Society**

It is important to understand Victorian and Puritan values in order to be able to analyze Montgomery's view of children and her way of describing their situation. It was mainly the situation of children, and more importantly, the situation of orphaned children during the Victorian era, that helped me in understanding Montgomery's novels and Emily's situation. A study of Victorian children's literature with a focus on the conduct books also gives an insight into Victorian and Puritan values.

The situation of children at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century was improving significantly, highly influenced by the reforms that were in progress in society at large. These improvements were mirrored by legal reforms stipulating children's rights, the way children were educated, and the way children were brought up. Although life for many offered more possibilities and opportunities, children were almost

entirely dependent on their parents and what the parents' situation in life was. The government did not want to meddle with how parents chose to deal with their children. Even when children were abandoned, the courts did not want to meddle. Legally children did not have many rights. Physically abused and exploited children were not rare. Parents were considered to have an “absolute authority” over the children, especially the fathers. According to Sally Mitchell, everything that children owned, including property and other assets, all legally belonged to their parents or their guardians until they reached the age of twenty-one. However, financial responsibility for the child was only required until the child became sixteen years old (107-109).

In the upper classes children were often separated from adults, so that their innocence would not be corrupted. This isolation of children was created to shelter them from parts of life that were considered unsuitable for them, such as economic information and information about society. Children and teenagers were forbidden to read newspapers and often they were not included in discussions that adults had. Even if these discussions concerned the children themselves, they were sent away. The situation was quite different for children raised in lower class families; at an early age they already had started helping out at home. This is especially true for girls of the family, who were employed in helping their mother and taking care of younger siblings. The majority of the children were introduced into the workforce at a very young age and were not educated at all (Mitchell 41-44, 147, 152).

The legal situation of orphans was quite different from children in general. The first adoption legislation in Canada was created in 1873 by the province of New Brunswick, where formal adoptions were allowed; however, the majority of the provinces did not follow until the 1920s. Before this adoptions were not possible (Strong-Boag). If a child born into a wealthy or a middle class family was orphaned, the parents usually instructed for the care of their children in a will. The will usually named a guardian for the children. This was particularly the case when the children inherited property. Trustees were often named in the will that administered the property on behalf of the child. There were also cases when the will assigned the physical custody of the child to a person other than the guardian. Children from the lower classes that were orphaned were usually taken in by relatives, friends, or neighbors that acted as their guardians (Mitchell 107-109). This is called by Walker in her article “Adoption and Victorian Culture” an “informal adoption” (212). In this manner children

could stay in their own neighborhoods close to remaining family and friends. However, orphans most often had to work and contribute to their own upkeep.

Puritan views had a strong influence on British society and had a significant part in Victorian morality. Work was a very important aspect of Puritan values and life; it was one of the key Puritan virtues. If one did not work and provide for oneself, this was considered to be a sin (Mitchell 256, 263). Therefore, children that came out of households that could not provide for them or where the parents had perished due to a disease were considered to have a stronger inclination for sin, since sin was believed to be hereditary (Walker 212-213). They had to be purified by their parents, teachers and guardians, who all had been granted an absolute authority over the child both by the state and the church. Whitaker comments that it was the “duty of parents, teachers and guardians to impress on [the child] both the sinfulness of his fallen nature and the ideal which he should follow if he would escape the fires of hell” (50-51).

The lives of children were described in a rather different way in literature. Literature for children written during this time had a purpose to educate children and inculcate moral values in them. Among the books that mostly served this purpose were the conduct books. Ostry gives a pertinent description of conduct books written during the Victorian era:

Conduct books address the child and/or parent, and focus on the moral development of the child. They include lectures on morality, cautionary and exemplary tales complete with glosses, and sermons [---] Indeed, independence is not fostered so much as bending the child to the parent’s will [...] Parents are not only to be obeyed, but viewed in as favorable a light as possible. (27-28)

As adults had an absolute authority over children, the children’s wellbeing depended on how they were treated by the adults. It is clear that this was a strict society where children were considered to be sinful and in need of correction. From what has been mentioned, it is evident that many children were living under difficult conditions and did not have many rights in Victorian society.

## Emily's Situation as an Orphan

Since part of the aim of this essay is to demonstrate that the novels about the orphan Emily are in conflict with earlier literature regarding the manner childhood is considered, it is important to analyze Emily's situation as an orphan. It is not uncommon to find the main character in Victorian literature to be an orphan, since it was quite a popular theme during that era. Orphans were the most vulnerable in society because of their exposed situation, isolation, and the fact that their provision depends on the goodwill of others (Whitaker 52).

The fact that Emily is an orphan aligns the story to the traditions of Victorian literature. Perhaps Montgomery chose to make Emily an orphan in her story as a means of putting her in an isolated and exposed situation. Emily's isolation is commented on by Cowan Fredeman in her article. She argues that "with the exception of Pat Gardiner all Montgomery's heroines are isolated from the normal pattern of family life" (64). *Emily of New Moon* begins the story with the tragic death of Emily's father. Since she is already motherless, Emily is taken from a loving and nurturing family life and placed in the care of her wealthy but unfamiliar relatives, the Murrays, who consider her a burden. Because of their unwillingness to take care of this defenseless child, they decide her fate by chance. The Murrays cannot decide on which one of them will give Emily a home. So they determine to write their names on slips of paper, and Emily will draw the slip that will decide where her future home will be. The narrator relates Emily's feelings: "Emily trembled so violently that at first she could not draw one. This was terrible – it seemed as if she must blindly settle her own fate. 'Draw' said Aunt Elizabeth" (I, 43)<sup>1</sup>. Emily's future and wellbeing suddenly depends on the goodwill of the "proud Murrays" who only take her in to keep their reputation intact and satisfy their family pride. They make her decide her future home by chance, something that probably would put any child under heavy pressure. In this way, Montgomery forebodes the coldness that she will be treated with in her new home.

Emily's refuge in her new home is mainly in being able to express her feelings in writing, but the new relationships that she forges with Cousin Jimmy and Aunt Laura comfort her when she feels like an alien in this new environment. However, living at New Moon, Emily is constantly reminded by the people around her that she is living on the charity of others. Often the reminder is made in connection with correction of her behavior or when

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<sup>1</sup> Since there are two primary sources, when a reference is given to the novels, roman numerals will be used: *Emily of New Moon* (I) and *Emily Climbs* (II).

something is expected of her. One of the occasions when Aunt Elizabeth reminds Emily of this, is when she finds the hidden letters that Emily has written to her dead father. This leads to a great quarrel between the two. As Aunt Elizabeth is angry about finding Emily's not so favorable description of her, and Emily's view on her authority, Emily feels that Aunt Elizabeth has trespassed on her relationship with her father. Aunt Elizabeth reminds Emily of her situation at New Moon as she says: "So this is your gratitude [...] You were a penniless orphan – I took you to my home – I have given you shelter and food and education and kindness – and this is my thanks." As the quarrel is reaching its end, Aunt Elizabeth finishes it by saying: "Keep your letters [...] and scorn the old woman who opened her home to you" (I, 311). This is only one of the occasions where Emily is reminded by the people in her proximity that she is an orphan and that her wellbeing is dependent on the goodwill of others.

The way that Emily is considered by the Murrays is something that is quickly perceived by the Blair Water community. The unwelcoming attitude appears in many ways in her contact with the members of the community, but it is most evident in her school class, where it is exercised by both her teacher, Miss Brownell, and her classmates. This is already evident on her first school day in the school. As Emily sits at her desk among all her new classmates she suddenly feels very lonely and misses her father. As she bursts into tears one of her classmates makes Miss Brownell aware of it:

"What is the matter with you, Emily?" said Miss Brownell suddenly and accusingly.

Emily was silent. She could not tell Miss Brownell what was the matter with her – especially when Miss Brownell used such a tone.

"When I ask one of my pupils a question, Emily, I am accustomed to having an answer. Why are you crying?"

There was another giggle from across the aisle. Emily lifted miserable eyes and in her extremity fell back on a phrase of her father's.

"It is a matter that concerns only myself," she said.

A red spot suddenly appeared in Miss Brownell's sallow cheek. Her eyes gleamed with cold fire.

"You will remain in during recess as a punishment for your impertinence," she said [...] (I, 78)

Emily's classmates quickly adopt the views of the adults, and as the school day continues they gang up on Emily in the schoolyard. The narrator says that "[c]hildren can be the most cruel creatures alive" and that "[t]hey have the herd prejudice against any outsider"



(I, 79). They also resent the fact that she is “one of the proud Murrays,” and as they gang up on her, one of the girls accuses Emily of being “a proud one.” As the children probably have heard their parents and other adults talking, they have learnt of Emily’s situation. This is the first weapon they choose to use against her. The girl continues saying: “Oh, my, you may have buttoned boots, but you are living on charity.” These episodes are examples of how the community of Blair Water regards Emily, as one living on charity.

## **Absolute Authority**

In Emily’s life, there are at least two strong adult female characters that dominate her life and attempt to exercise absolute authority over her. These two characters are her two aunts, Aunt Elizabeth and Aunt Ruth. Karen Waterston, cited by Kate Lawson, claims that Montgomery’s heroines, including Emily, are made motherless, but given aunts that can “be safely hated” (“Adolescence and the Trauma” 39). In this section Emily’s relationship with her two aunts, Aunt Elizabeth and Aunt Ruth will be examined in order to see in what manner they exercise their authority over Emily.

To analyze the roles of Aunt Elizabeth and Aunt Ruth, Greimas’s actantial model will be applied. It is a very useful tool in determining a character’s importance to the story. By using this tool it is possible to identify the different functions of characters, objects and forces that may have an influence on a story. The model structures the characters into six actants that are named subject, object, sender, helper, receiver, and opponent (Keen 84-85). In this case, Emily would be the subject, and the object would be her personal growth and her aim to be a writer. An analysis of the actantial roles of Aunt Elizabeth and Aunt Ruth will follow further on in this chapter.

Very early in *Emily of New Moon* Ellen Greene, who is Emily’s father’s housekeeper, makes it very clear that the “boss” at New Moon is Aunt Elizabeth. This is a very important fact that is revealed already before the Murrays arrive at Maywood, even before it is decided that it will be the Murrays from New Moon that will take care of Emily (I, 22). Aunt Elizabeth’s role as the head of the family residing at New Moon is very important to the story. She has absolute authority over New Moon and the people who live there. She demands complete obedience and does not tolerate being questioned.

The conflicts that rise out of Aunt Elizabeth's authoritative way of ruling over New Moon are very important driving forces in the story about Emily. Aunt Elizabeth exercises absolute power and control, which very few things can alter. Lawson says on this subject that it can be argued that this female power is a disguise for patriarchal power. The disguise in a female form enables it to be exposed to criticism and scrutiny to which it otherwise would not have been exposed ("Adolescence and the Trauma" 24). Epperly confirms this view by "saying that Montgomery presented 'patriarchs as women, thus making behavior and attitudes that would have been acceptable in a man seem grotesque'" (cited in Lawson, "Adolescence and the Trauma" 24). With this absolute authority ruling New Moon, Emily is put in a very difficult situation. Aunt Elizabeth makes it clear on several occasions that she is caring for Emily only out of duty. Only moments after Emily has drawn the lot with Aunt Elizabeth's name on it, Elizabeth says to her brother Wallace "Since it has fallen to me to take her, I shall do all that is necessary, Wallace. I do not shirk my duty." When Emily hears her aunt say this, the narrator relates the child's thoughts: "I am her duty [...] Father said nobody ever liked a duty. So Aunt Elizabeth will never like me" (I, 43). The fact that Aunt Elizabeth does not like Emily makes Emily a target for many injustices.

In Victorian society with strong Puritan influences the upbringing of children was, as has already been noted, seen as a purifying process that purged the child from sin. In Emily's story it is evident that Aunt Elizabeth embraces these values. An example of this is the fact that she strives to control every aspect of Emily's life. She is not able to control Emily's inner life though, and as a compensation for her inability to control it, she more or less does all that is possible to control Emily's exterior. Muriel A. Whitaker confirms this thought:

Because the Puritan child was regarded as a "brand of hell", it was the duty of parents, teachers, and guardians to impress on him both the sinfulness of his fallen nature and the ideal which he should follow if he would escape the fires of hell [...] vanity, impertinence, impiety, and disobedience were the faults which in the didactic literature that adults thought suitable for children, inevitably led to horrendous ends [...] Ellen Greene, Aunt Elizabeth and Miss Brownell in *Emily of New Moon* are purveyors of the moral and religious ethos which controls the lives of Montgomery's heroines. (50, 51)

Aunt Elizabeth's actantial role in *Emily of New Moon* is quite obviously the opponent, as she attempts to restrain Emily's personal growth both as an individual and an

artist. I would however, like to argue that she also has the actantial role of the sender, although it is a role that is shared by other people and forces as well. As Aunt Elizabeth tries to stop Emily from writing and tries to limit her privacy, Emily becomes even more determined to keep her inner thoughts private. Emily's and Aunt Elizabeth's numerous confrontations often force Emily to resort to deception and secrecy, although on occasions Emily's own temper is triggered, leading to Emily winning the battle. She experiences personal growth both as an artist and as a person from her confrontations with Aunt Elizabeth (Lawson, "Adolescence and the Trauma" 22-23, 29). Having her Aunt Elizabeth as an opponent accelerates and pushes Emily's development as an independent person and a writer and indirectly gives Aunt Elizabeth the role of the sender as well as the role of the opponent.

As the story moves on, Emily's and Aunt Elizabeth's relationship takes a turn. This is most evident in the scene where Aunt Elizabeth finds Emily's hidden letters to her father and reads them. At the resolution of their quarrel, Aunt Elizabeth, for the first time, expresses affection towards Emily. For the first time she also recognizes that she is the one at fault when saying to Emily: "Emily, I had no right to read your letters. I admit I was wrong." She continues, saying: "I – don't like to think you – *hate* me – my sister's child – little Juliet's child" (I, 313). Aunt Elizabeth thus, shows Emily that she considers her to be family because of genuine feelings of kinship. At this point Aunt Elizabeth's roles as opponent and sender become vaguer and transform into being more the role of a helper.

Aunt Ruth's character is present during the whole story, but in *Emily of New Moon* she is kept in the background. During the occasions that she appears in the story she comments on Emily and her behavior, looks, and manners, and she accuses Emily of being a "sly child." Emily's and Aunt Ruth's relationship is characterized by a strong and mutual dislike.

When Emily is fourteen it is decided by the "family conclave" that she is going to attend school in Shrewsbury. It is also decided that Emily will stay with Aunt Ruth, since she lives in Shrewsbury. This coincides with the change that is taking place in Emily's and Aunt Elizabeth's relationship. As Emily's story continues in *Emily Climbs*, Aunt Elizabeth's actantial roles, as mentioned before, change from the opponent and sender towards the role of helper. The role of the opponent is now transferred to Aunt Ruth. Emily moves into Aunt Ruth's house in Shrewsbury and is subjected to her absolute power and also to her suspicion and distrust. This distrust is present during the whole time that Emily lives with her. On one

occasion, by mistake Emily takes Aunt Ruth's seat while attending church and she accuses Emily of doing it on purpose: "Em'ly, you know what you did. I will not tolerate slyness. What was your motive?" Emily apologizes for the unintentional mistake, but Aunt Ruth's reply reflects her suspicion "I will forgive you this time, but don't let it happen again. Of course I didn't expect you would tell me your reason. You are too sly for that" (II, 106).

Another example – and probably the most striking one – of Aunt Ruth's suspicion and desire to find faults in Emily, is when she catches Emily and Perry at night in the dining room. The whole scene begins with Perry visiting Emily to tell her about a very important dinner he has attended. As the clock strikes twelve Perry jumps in through the window and kisses Emily without her having a possibility to stop him. Exactly at that point Aunt Ruth storms in and witnesses the scene. The whole episode is taken out of proportion since Aunt Ruth tends to think the worst of Emily, and Emily on the other hand does not give an explanation. The reason for Emily's silence is that she does not think that Aunt Ruth will believe her side of the story even if she tells the truth. Aunt Ruth takes Emily to New Moon so that judgment can be passed by the "family court." However, the events do not proceed in the way that Aunt Ruth wishes them to. Aunt Elizabeth and Aunt Laura are inclined to believe Aunt Ruth's account of the episode since Emily had refused to give her account of it, but Cousin Jimmy steps in, and he reminds the aunts that appearances are not always what they seem and that Emily's account of the episode should be heard. As he does this, the aunts are reminded of Emily being an individual, deserving to be heard (II, 232-243).

Emily's residence at Aunt Ruth's house, besides being characterized by suspicion, is also characterized by imprisonment. Aunt Ruth exercises her authority over Emily to metaphorically imprison her. On the very first day when Emily arrives at Aunt Ruth's house, she makes it clear that Emily will not be at liberty to bring her friends there. Already from the beginning, Emily's friends Perry and Teddy are banned from her house and as soon as Aunt Ruth can find a reason, Ilse is also banned from visiting. Emily's room in Aunt Ruth's house can be viewed as a metaphorical prison. Lawson agrees with this thought as she comments on how Emily feels in the house and her new home in Shrewsbury:

Not only does her unhomely room lack privacy – the door won't close – it also seems as cramped as a prison cell. Aunt Ruth's attempts to restrict Emily's visitors again emphasize its prisonlike nature.

Emily may feel metaphorically imprisoned at Aunt Ruth's. ("Disappointed' House" 81)

Emily is confined to this prison in Aunt Ruth's house during her education in Shrewsbury. However on several occasions she questions and defies Aunt Ruth's authority over her, and ultimately Emily prevails in her relationship with Aunt Ruth, although not in the same way as with Aunt Elizabeth. She prevails in that she does not succumb to Aunt Ruth's suspicion and imprisonment before returning to New Moon after finishing her education. In contrast, the relationship Emily has with Aunt Elizabeth transforms to a more loving one.

An analysis of Aunt Ruth's character using Greimas's actantial model gives a quite similar outcome as the analysis of Aunt Elizabeth. It is quite clear that she plays the actantial role of the opponent, since she also attempts to restrain Emily's personal growth. I would like to argue that she also partially plays the role of the sender for the same reason as Aunt Elizabeth does.

The confrontations that Emily has with Aunt Ruth also accelerate and push Emily's development as an independent person and a writer, though not to the same degree as in her relationship with Aunt Elizabeth. The main difference between the two women is that Aunt Ruth's character does not change in the same manner as Aunt Elizabeth's character does. At the end of *Emily of New Moon* Aunt Elizabeth does not play the role of opponent anymore, while Aunt Ruth at the end of *Emily Climbs* still keeps her role as opponent but loses the role of sender since she does not have direct influence over Emily's life.

By analyzing these two characters that have such absolute power over Emily in terms of their relationships to her, it can be clearly seen that Montgomery has aimed to throw light on the situation of children to expose the manner that many of them were treated by the adults in their proximity. According to Ann S. Cowan "Montgomery does not admit the right of one person to possess or dominate another, and characters who try to do so in her novels are always foiled" (46). In Emily's case we have seen that she has been dominated in a tyrannical manner by two of the people that she relied on to fulfill her basic needs; however, instead of conforming to the rigid standards, Emily rebels against them. Aunt Elizabeth and Aunt Ruth thus unintentionally contribute to her personal growth. With regard to this discussion it is safe to conclude that even if Montgomery's story about Emily is directed towards children and adolescents, the morality is directed towards adults rather than children.

## Rebellion

So far the discussion has focused on the situation of children in general and on Emily's situation as an orphan. In this chapter the focus will be on the rebellious nature of the children in the *Emily* novels to illustrate their nonconformity with earlier literature. As mentioned earlier, some traits from Victorian children's literature are evident in the novel, such as Emily being an orphan. The rebellious child was also a very common element in Victorian literature together with moral lessons for children. If a child would not do what was mandated by the parents or by religious ethos, he or she would be punished by a higher power, or his or her own actions would come back to haunt him or her. The moral lessons in the story about Emily are significantly different. They do not follow the pattern of the conduct books and this will be demonstrated by an examination of Emily's and some of the other characters' rebellious natures and the results of their rebellious behavior.

Emily's rebellious nature does not take form in the manner that it is expected by her family, who are worried that Emily has inherited her mother's inclination towards sexually rebellious behavior. Emily's mother ran away from the rigid and strict family home and chose to distance herself from it by marrying a man who could not satisfy the high standards of her family. As Aunt Elizabeth and Aunt Laura embody Puritan repression, they attempt to exercise an oppressing and repressing influence over Emily by trying to imprint Puritan values on her (Lawson, "Adolescence and the Trauma" 24, 32-33). The inheritance from her mother is very strong in Emily, but her rebellious nature takes a different form. Because of her strong sense of justice and her self preserving nature she questions the absolute authority that is exercised over her by adults. When Emily feels that her sense of justice is violated or her identity is threatened by it, she defies it and confronts it. According to Cowan Fredeman

Emily never falters in her sense of justice or in her forthrightness. When her Aunt Elizabeth demands to see the account book in which she keeps her writings, she burns it; when her father is called a failure, she retaliates. So, too, as she settles into New Moon, she learns she can master both the children -- who reject her "because you ain't a bit like us" -- and even her aunt Elizabeth, when "some formidable power in [her] soul" brings Archibald Murray's expression to her face. (68)

Elizabeth Waterston conveys the thought that Emily's rebellion is both empowered and limited by her inheritance (118). The Murrays limit the family inheritance to Emily's exterior when they enumerate the relatives that she resembles. However, the Murray runs deep in Emily and it is most apparent in her rage, when an uncanny resemblance to her grandfather Archibald Murray appears and distorts her face. This facial expression is called the "Murray look" (Lawson, "Adolescence and the Trauma" 29). This suggests that not only the expression but also the rage behind it is inherited from the Murray side of her family. Instead of following her mother's example to run away, that "curious streak of granite in Emily's composition which [is] unyielding and unbendable and unbreakable" (I, 304) helps her in confronting the situations where attempts are made to subdue her and her writing creativity.

The "Murray look" appears for the first time when Aunt Elizabeth has a confrontation with Emily about cutting her hair. Emily is mourning the loss of her friendship with Rhonda Stuart. But instead of trying to see under the surface, Aunt Elizabeth blames Emily's lack of spirit on her hair, saying that Emily's hair "took from her strength" (I, 105) and decides to cut Emily's hair. Emily opposes her, as she thinks that her long black hair is the only beauty she has, and she conquers Aunt Elizabeth with the "Murray look." Lawson points out that the rage that provokes this look is "a rage which Emily cannot summon consciously but which comes in moments of psychic stress" ("Adolescence and the Trauma" 29).

According to Lawson, Montgomery has equipped Emily with a "female rage" that she has inherited from a long line of angry and rebellious ancestors ("Adolescence and the Trauma" 29). This female rage is a part of her Murray inheritance, and can also be recognized in Aunt Elizabeth and Aunt Ruth. An example of what this female rage is capable of when uncontrolled, was displayed by Aunt Elizabeth when she was a child and pushed Cousin Jimmy down the well. He tells Emily the story: "I made Elizabeth mad – forget what I said – 'twasn't hard to make her mad, you understand – and she made to give me a bang on the head. I saw it coming – and stepped back to get out of the way – and down I went, head first" (I, 67).

Emily's first years growing up with her loving father, who raises her in an unconventional manner, has shaped her into believing in equality. Due to her strong sense of justice, she insists on the same rights as an adult. She confronts the adults that try to dominate

her and demands to be treated as an individual having the same rights as they have. The result of this, besides Emily succeeding in gaining the right to her individuality, is that she changes the adults in her proximity (Whitaker 55).

While Emily's inherited Murray rage empowers her rebellion, other inherited Murray traits limit her rebellion. As New Moon becomes Emily's home, she realizes that she is tied to it not only by history but also by blood. When Miss Royal offers to take her to New York to make her a writer, Emily turns down the offer and moves back to New Moon which is more important to her than having a career, thus acting according to Victorian propriety, which states that an unmarried girl does not leave home until she is married (II, 301-309). This demonstrates that Emily does not rebel against social conventions. Instead Montgomery has provided two other rebels in the characters of Ilse and Perry that compensate for Emily's lack of rebellion to social rules.

Waterston mentions that "'Ilse's' name sounds like 'Ipse,' the Freudian other self," implying that Ilse is Emily's "other self" (124). Ilse rebels against a number of rules that Emily follows. Emily limits her religious defiance to rejecting Aunt Elizabeth's and Aunt Ruth's God and to following her own God, while Ilse takes her religious defiance one step further by rejecting God altogether. She also goes against the accepted social view altogether by not only thinking of her disbelief in God but openly speaking it (Waterston 117). Even though Ilse defies the most sacred tenet in Puritan society, she is not punished for it, though.

If Ilse is the religious rebel; Perry is the one who breaks the class barriers. His defiance of class divisions is more subtle though, and not so marked by certain events in the story as Emily's and Ilse's defiance. He is an impoverished orphan from the slums who aims to rise above the class that he is born into (Waterston 118). He starts out as a farmhand at New Moon but quickly rises above his position by working hard. As we have seen earlier, education was a privilege that a child from the lower classes usually could not afford. Perry though is enrolled in the Blair Water school at the same time as Emily, and he also attends secondary school in Shrewsbury. Towards the end of *Emily of New Moon* the way in which people regard him changes and even Aunt Elizabeth recognizes his potential (I, 300). It is in Shrewsbury that Perry Miller reaches the same social status as Emily and Ilse, as he delivers a speech at a debate and the Principal of the Shrewsbury High School notices him. An invitation to the Principal's house for dinner is the official approval granting him a rise in status. Perry's ambitions are met by sarcasm but there are no repercussions, on the contrary



his ambitions are to some extent admired by some of the people that previously had disregarded him.

As we have seen the *Emily* novels do not follow the same pattern as the conduct books do. The main way in which they differ is that the morality lesson for the rebellious child is missing. There are no moral lessons included in the *Emily* novels teaching children that they will be punished for disobedience when they rebel against unjust treatment. Emily reacts to the authoritarian adults, but instead of coming to a bad end as the rebellious child so often did in earlier literature, she learns by experience and with this the rebellion contributes to her personal growth and development (Whitaker 52). Likewise, Ilse and Perry also grow from their defiance of the social conventions that govern the society around them both in Blair Water and in Shrewsbury.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this essay was essentially twofold. The first part was to analyze the first two novels about Emily in order to see if Montgomery's focus in the novels was telling the story of a child's struggle against the absolute authority of adults in order to grow and gain independence. The second part was to see if Montgomery focuses on including moral lessons for adults in their conduct with children instead of including moral lessons for children that was so common in earlier literature.

The analysis makes it clear that Emily is dominated by her aunts Elizabeth and Ruth, and that they attempt to exercise an absolute authority. However after an analysis of her aunts' characters with the aid of Greimas's actantial model it is evident that even though they attempt to restrain or inhibit Emily's development, both Aunt Elizabeth and Aunt Ruth play the actantial role of the sender as their attempts to restrain or inhibit Emily instead spurr her to reach her goal. The novels focus a great deal on the conflicts between Emily and her aunts that trigger Emily's personal growth. The analysis of these conflicts provides an answer regarding Montgomery's focus in the novels. The novels about Emily do not only show the struggle of a child to grow up and develop her own person but also show how she does this by questioning and defying the absolute authority of adults.

Emily's rebellious nature provides the concluding point of the analysis. She does not conform to absolute authority when it is violating her sense of justice or threatening her identity. Instead of coming to a bad end because of this rebellious behavior, Emily gains experience and this contributes to her growth as an individual. Thus, the moral lessons that were such an integral part of earlier children's literature are not a part of the *Emily* novels. The likely conclusion is that Montgomery on the contrary has included moral lessons for adults by exposing to scrutiny the manner that absolute authority by adults violates a child's sense of justice, denies her of her rights and threatens her identity.

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