Lesley Strutt is a writer living in Merrickville, Ontario. She has a PhD from McGill and her writing includes poetry, essays, an award-winning play, and novels. Her debut YA novel, On the Edge, *was published by Inanna Publications and Education, 2019. Her first full poetry collection* Window Ledge *is forthcoming with Inanna in 2020.*

L.M. MONTGOMERY AND THE MATTER OF NATURE(S)

Rita Bode and Jean Mitchell, Eds.
Toronto: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2018

REVIEWED BY ANIKO VARPALOTAI

This book of essays is a product of the ninth biennial international conference of the L.M. Montgomery Institute based at the University of Prince Edward Island. The Institute is dedicated to the study of the life and works of the celebrated author of *Anne of Green Gables* (1908). Given our heightened awareness of environmental issues, and the growing interdisciplinary fields of ecocriticism and ecofeminism, the authors provide a timely reflection on nature in writings from a century ago. "The collection, […], includes literary, anthropological, gender, ecological, legal, queer, and postcolonial perspectives which provoke new critical entries into Montgomery's work in the context of the matter of nature."

Catriona Sandilands' queer ecological analysis of the "Pat" books: *Pat of Silver Bush* (1933) and *Mistress Pat* (1935*)* draws parallels with Jane Rule's novel *After the Fire* (1989). The books share themes of fire and islands and gendered social relations and a deep connection with a sense of space. Rita Bode in her chapter "L.M. Montgomery's 'Indoors and Out': Imagining Organic Architecture" builds on this in a more urban context. However, Prince Edward Island clearly remained "in her blood" long after Montgomery's move to Ontario. Jennifer H. Litster's chapter "Going Back with L.M. Montgomery to PEI", draws on descriptions of the weather and agriculture and varying perspectives on observing and controlling nature.

Elizabeth Rollins Epperly highlights Montgomery's bridging of various landscapes and forms of nature, "a pattern of metaphors dependent on, and reflecting, her ideas about nature and human interaction with 'it.'" Both Epperly and the following author Jean Mitchell, comment on the healing power of nature. Mitchell focuses in particular on "the nineteenth-century recognition of nature's therapeutic properties as a source of energy for depleted nerves," a concern for Montgomery throughout her adult life. This belief in the restorative powers of nature is revealed in her Muskoka based book *The Blue Castle* (1926).

Another chapter explores natural law theory within children's literature (see Kate Sutherland's "The Education of Emily: Tempering a Force of Nature through Lessons in Law"). Montgomery herself was embroiled in legal troubles for many years, first with her original publisher based in Boston, and later in Ontario due to an automobile accident involving her husband. These battles are chronicled in great detail in her journals, and Sutherland sees her affinity with natural law ultimately reflected in her fiction.

Tara K. Parmiter delves into "The Spirit of Inquiry: Nature Study and the Sense of Wonder in L.M. Montgomery's Anne Books". This topic will resonate with all readers/viewers of *Anne*. The orphan theme is explored by Paul Keen, invoking the 'nature vs. nurture' debates. He is particularly interested in "the ways that L.M. Montgomery uses the figure of the orphan in *Anne of Green Gables* to challenge the binary limitations" of this concept. Interestingly, orphans feature in some of Montgomery's other books, including *Rainbow Valley* (1919), but portrayed quite differently from *Anne*.

"Kindred spirits" is another memorable expression throughout the *Anne* series, drawn out in Laura M. Robinson's chapter. She explores close friendships in *Anne's House of Dreams* (1917) and *The Blue Castle* and the changing nature of kinship, including challenges to the patriarchal family.

The final two chapters both explore empathy in Montgomery's work. Lesley D. Clement takes the approach of 'poetic sensibility' which allows Montgomery's characters to "have the capacity to develop an intimate relationship with nature… including that of empathy." She harkens back to a journal entry where Montgomery expresses a prescient concern for human impact on the natural world. Idette Noome brings this anxiety closer to home with a review of the pets in Montgomery's life and books (particularly her affection for cats). She finds a rather disturbing thread of instances of animal abuse and cruelty, coupled with Montgomery's deep concern for the welfare of these pets. This theme signals Montgomery's awareness "of shifts in the diverse discourse surrounding human-animal relations that persisted throughout the nineteenth century" including animal rights legislation and the emergence of societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals. Noome concludes that "Writing in a time in which human-animal relations—and indeed the relation of humans to nature in general—were becoming an increasingly contested

arena, Montgomery keeps her focus firmly on humans… but does present animals who have some subjectivity."

The above quote perhaps captures the essence of this entire collection. While Montgomery is best known for her memorable human characters, each of her stories is circumscribed by natural surroundings which play significant roles in their own right.

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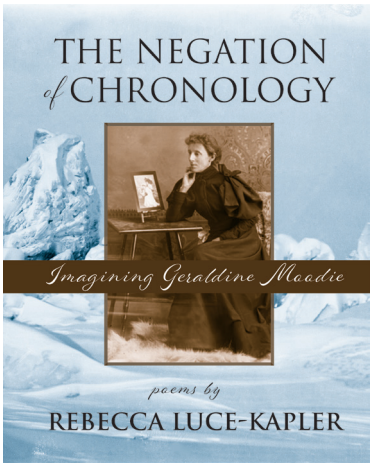
THE NEGATION OF CHRONOLOGY: IMAGINING GERALDINE MOODIE

Rebecca Luce-Kapler
Toronto: Inanna Publications, 2020

REVIEWED BY WENDY DONAWA

A quiet irony underlies Rebecca Luce-Kapler's *The Negation of Chronology* as its narrative voices unpack the remarkable life of Geraldine Moodie. Although each poem seems as self-contained as a photograph, taken as a whole, they chart Geraldine's life from birth to death, and leave the reader with a full and replete account of her layered existence.

From an infant seen by her midwife to have second sight, to a restless and self-willed young girl, the poems chronicle a portrait of the artist Geraldine will become. A young woman of dreams and visions, she avoids the respectable oppressive life of the Ontario spinster by



choosing marriage to an ambitious NWMP Officer who will repeatedly uproot their growing family to postings across the prairies and into the Yukon. In these moves she encounters "the botanic/of a prairie flora/ that moves imagination westward" and sees "the edges/of her life close behind her". In unfamiliar terrain she finds "unreadable" landscapes that "did not remember her", but finds "an open spirit rises/ into the fullness of blue", and "even the stars/ swallowed her in their bowl of light".

Later, moving from Medicine Hat to Lethbridge while recuperating from a serious injury, she is given a Kodak, and becomes obsessed with the "search for a delicate/ thing shining from a backdrop", a contrast to her husband's "certainty of opinion as he tidies his mustache". "Already/ I trust this tiny machine", she exults, and her thoughts turn to "the life/ I could live without him".

Sabotaged by domesticity, its "rumpled beds unmade", the constant uprooting of her home, art, and growing brood (six!), the disapproval of husband and community at her "mannish" establishment of a photographic studio, the raw grief of a child's death, she finds her real life in her art, in "the light [that] has carried her away". Her foray into the then-new and dangerous Photographic Powder deepens her art: "I long to map/a place onto glass plate until it seeps into my skin". Is this not also how we write or read a poem?

Despite being in many ways a woman of her time, her openness to and respect for her Indigenous sitters as more than exotic *objets* is articulated in "the beauty of their nature so they sit without judgement." One portrait captures a prairie elder with "the look/of one who has seen the future rising/from a long past"; years later in the Yukon, an Inuit woman "happy/to wait, knowing/ that all she is can be/ gathered into the small box".

Geraldine ages, "feels the wash/ of time settle around her ankles". Grandchildren are born; Geraldine accommodates a marriage where "we never speak of feelings". But "over the years our bodies have found/a geography they understand". "My eyes measuring the light" is her fulfillment, eyes that "see otherwise/ something that lives beyond", as her photographs do. And with a mischevous understanding of the constructed self, she explains her "imaging the way I want to be seen."

Ironically, the poetry sequence's insistence on a negation of chronology, insists that the moment captured by the lens has no *before* or *after*, and yet provides a tantalizing linguistic parallel both in the individual poems and in the overall structure. Each of the poems is as self-contained as a photograph, and often as startling as the momentary image itself—interplay of light and dark, actual and metaphysical, in art as in life. Is this long-poem narrative perhaps a playful *ars poetica* for Luce-Kapler's own writing?

Luce-Kapler's diction is spare, direct, forthright; it sparkles with images of dark and light. Each poem has the clarity and completeness of a well-crafted photograph, and some of its mystery too. Layered meanings and implications place a moment in time, in place, in relationship,