

Rita Bode, Lesley D. Clements, E. Holly Pike, and Margaret Steffler, eds.

*Children and Childhoods in L. M. Montgomery: Continuing Conversations*

Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2022. 352 pp.

I was recently hiking in Europe and walked with dozens of people from around the world—New Zealand, Germany, US, Poland, Ireland, Slovakia, Indonesia—and about half of the people I met knew Prince Edward Island, the tiny Canadian province I live in. Those who did, knew it for one reason: *Anne of Green Gables*. They told stories about how central it and other novels by L. M. Montgomery were in their childhoods, how much their ideas about themselves and their early identities were shaped as children by the power of Montgomery's writing. They are the "Anneites" or "Maud Squad" that Kate Scarth refers to in her chapter of the edited collection *Children and Childhoods in L. M. Montgomery*. In this varied but uniformly strong collection of essays about connections, conversations, confluences, and influences in Montgomery's works, we get a sense of where that power comes from, power over both child and adult readers for over a hundred years and from around the world.

*Children and Childhoods in L. M. Montgomery* covers a lot of ground in Montgomery studies. It arranges its twelve essays into four groupings: conversing with the past; fantasy, the ideal, and reality; transformative relationships and spaces; and anime, fanfiction, and TV adaptations. Two big ideas run through the collection. The first is the way Montgomery redefines, rethinks, and models children and childhood through her characters, a thread that makes this a very useful addition to the history of the idea of the child. The second is the complex interplay of connections to texts, characters, and genres that Montgomery or her readers make beyond the novels themselves. Those connections are presented variously as "influence," "confluence," and my favorite, "conversation," and the essays together insist on the richness that comes when one has, in the words of the introduction, "meaningful conversations with what one is reading" (7).

Kate Scarth's examination of domestic space in Montgomery's *Emily of New Moon* and Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* is a stand-out. She elegantly traces how the two heroines, Emily and Fanny, claim agency through natural and domestic spaces. Equally strong and quite moving at times is Lesley D. Clement's look at the understanding of death and dying in Montgomery's novels and how the child characters come to terms with loss. Margaret Steffler traces the "Performance of the Beautiful Dream Boy" in Montgomery's novels and Frances Hodgson Burnett's, drawing connections between the fictional boys and the authors' own sons. Bonnie Tulloch is interested in the blurring of the real and the fantastic and the distinction between adult and child responses to the fantastic as she connects Anne and Peter Pan. Asa Warnqvist has new and interesting things to say about playful and imaginative children as she connects Anne with Pippi Longstocking. Other essays raise connections with Shakespeare, Madeleine L'Engle, Suzanne Collins, Charles Dickens, and then the afterlives of Anne in animé, adaptations, and fanfiction, all suggesting how centered L. M. Montgomery is within this rich and generative conversation. Together, these

chapters will be equally of interest to researchers in the history of children's literature and childhood, to educators at all levels, and to specialists in Canadian and Atlantic literature.

The collection ends with "Afterwords," a grouping of interviews, letters, and creative responses, which hints at what makes this collection so valuable and still rare in academic literary studies. That section includes interviews with Satu Koskimies and Vilja-Tuulia Huotarinen, authors of a novel, *Emilia Kent*, which picks up where *Emily's Quest* leaves off; Holly Cinnamon's beautiful poem about "that queer red-headed girl next door" (290); a piece by Rosalee Peppard Lockyer that imagines Katie Maurice (Anne's imaginary friend) writing a poem for "My Maud" (295); and Kit Pearson's letter to Maud that ends "your protégé, Kit Pearson" (302). These end-pieces insist that the conversation with Montgomery's work continues among readers and writers, and, whether it was intentional or not, the writing throughout is conversational, lucid, and accessible to all adult readers of Montgomery. The collection is concerned with the wide conversation that surrounds Montgomery's novels, and it models that broad audience and conversation. It is a book both for scholars and for the "Maud Squad."

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Daniel S. Moak

*From the New Deal to the War on Schools: Race, Inequality, and the Rise of the Punitive Education State*

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The contemporary US education system suffers from a multitude of problems: overworked and undervalued teachers, overreliance on standardized tests, and systemic racial inequality, just to name a few. Anyone seeking to understand why needs to pick up a copy of Daniel Moak's excellent book, *From the New Deal to the War on Schools: Race, Inequality, and the Rise of the Punitive Education State*.

Moak offers a readable and highly intelligible account of a complicated story. In the 1930s, the Great Depression made the widespread poverty caused by capitalism the nation's most pressing concern, and, the author explains, two groups of thinkers debated how the education system should play a role in solving this problem. The "social reconstructionists," as the author calls them, believed that "schools should help prepare students to fundamentally change the social order" (20). Led by Teachers College (TC) professors George Counts and Harold Rugg, the social reconstructionists believed a more democratic education could help remake the American political economy: away from the individual imperative of competing in a deeply unequal marketplace toward a nation built on social solidarity and economic security for all working people.