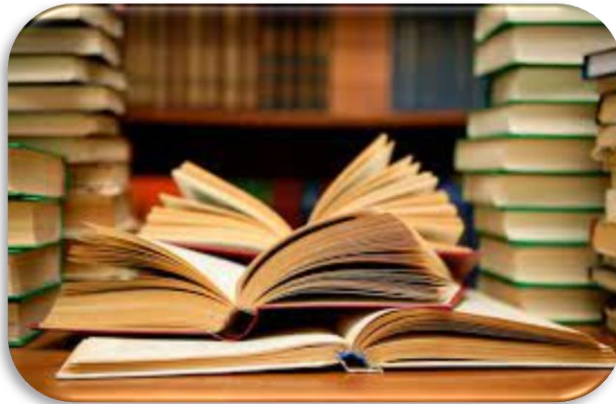


Review Paper



A Kristevan Reading of Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Emily of New Moon*

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore and examine Julia Kristeva's theory of the semiotic and symbolic dimensions of language on L. M. Montgomery's *Emily of New Moon*. In this novel Montgomery portrays the life of a young girl, Emily, who is in the middle of fight to gain self-realization. Kristeva suggests that the part of consciousness repressed by the process of the formation of the self through language – the symbolic- retains its own language - the semiotic- which cannot be entirely annihilated by our birth into the symbolic, and instead erupts into our controlled communication as unruly and uncontrolled expression. Emily has talent in writing and owns great imagination, which she uses as rebellion against the hardships of her life and by the interaction between father's realm of language and calmness and unity of mother's territory, her identity is in process. This research interprets Emily's shift from outer objective world to the inner reflective essence as a defense mechanism, through Kristeva's dichotomous concept of language.

Keywords: Identity, semiotic, symbolic, the subject in process, *Emily of New Moon*

خوانش کریستوایی رمان امیلی در نیومون اثر لوسی ماد مونتگمری

هدف از تحقیق حاضر مطالعه و بررسی جنبه های نمادین و نشانه ای زبان در رمان امیلی در نیومون بر اساس نظریه ژولیا کریستوا می باشد. مونتگمری در این رمان زندگی دختر جوانی به نام امیلی را به تصویر می کشد که در تلاش برای شناخت خویش است. کریستوا بر این باور است که عملکرد زبان گاه بصورت بیان خودآگاه و قاعده مند معنا صورت می گیرد که به آن امر نمادین زبان می گویند. اما گاه زبان برای انگیزش احساس و بیان ناخودآگاه بعد عاطفی سوژه به کار می رود که آن را امر نشانه ای نام می نهد. امر نشانه ای بطور مدام به ساختار نمادین معنا نفوذ کرده و نظم منطقی آن را با خلاقیت هایش بر هم می زند. امیلی دارای قوه تخیلی قوی است، قلم زیبایی دارد و نوشتن برایش در حکم طغیان بر علیه دشواری های زندگی است و ارتباط میان ساحت پدرا نه زبان و وحدت و آرامش ساحت مادرانه، در فرایند شکل گیری هویت او دخیل می باشند. این پژوهش، با استفاده از تقابل دوگانه نمادین و نشانه ای زبان در نظریه کریستوا، نشان می دهد که چگونه امیلی به ساختن دنیایی درونی و شهودی در برابر جهان نظم مند بیرون به عنوان نوعی مکانیسم دفاعی می پردازد.

واژگان کلیدی: هویت، امر نمادین، امر نشانه ای، سوژه-در-فرایند، امیلی در نیومون

INTRODUCTION

Lucy Maud Montgomery was born in the small village of Clifton, now known as New London, on the north shore of Prince Edward Island on November 30, 1874. Montgomery was prominent Canadian writer, creator of many poems, short stories, novels, and such a lovely character like Anne Shirley. She wrote for both teenagers and adult at the beginning of the 20th century. Among Montgomery's novels *Anne of Green Gables* series is the most famous and successful one but this paper focuses on Montgomery's *Emily of New Moon*. It is the first part of a trilogy: *Emily of New Moon* (1923), *Emily Climbs* (1925), and *Emily's Quest* (1927). This trilogy is Emily's story, an orphan who has to live with her aunts and cousin after her father's death. Emily has great talent in writing and a powerful imagination. She tries to follow her gift by writing poems and stories but she faces a lot of challenges in a hostile society. It is the story of her growth and development both as a writer and as an independent woman.

"Before the first of these novels was completed, Montgomery confided to a friend that Emily was an autobiographical character" (Tausky 5). Emily "will be, in a sense, more autobiographical than any of my other books. People were never right in saying I was "Anne" but, in some respects they will be right if they write me down as Emily" (5). Ann S. Cowan points out that:

In *Emily of New Moon*, *Emily Climbs*, and *Emily's Quest* L. M. Montgomery tempers the romantic fantasies of a book for girls with autobiographical notes from the life of a struggling young writer. The resultant trilogy fascinates the young reader and holds the interest of the adults. As Emily matures as a woman and as a writer, she must resolve the large questions of the human condition, and, in this, the books move to the realm of literature. (44)

To achieve an independent identity as a female writer, Emily encounters a lot of problems. Her mother's family, teacher, classmates, society, religion, and gender are different obstacles between Emily and her purposes. She uses her strong fantasy and imagination to bear hard situations and cope with new life without supporting father. Emily needs to establish herself as a poet, so she needs to establish independent identity for herself. To achieve this goal she should stand against a hostile society and family that threaten her subjectivity.

To show how Emily tries to keep her independent subjectivity and tolerate the opposite culture of her society one of the possible ways is Julia Kristeva's theories about semiotic and symbolic. "The semiotic element is what philosophers might think of as meaning proper. That is the symbolic is the element of signification that sets up the structures by which symbols operate. The symbolic is the structure or grammar that governs the way in which symbols can refer" (Smith 1998). This symbolic is different from Lacan's notion about symbolic. "Lacan's symbolic refers to signification in the broadest possible sense, including culture in general, Kristeva's symbolic is a term that delimit one element of language associated with syntax" (Oliver 1993).

Pre-oedipal realm of semiotic is associated with the body of mother, womb and mother's breast are first places of these experiences, but symbolic is associated with the laws of father which repress the semiotic drives and energies. So "the subject is seen no longer as the source of meaning but as the site of meaning, and may therefore undergo a radical dispersal of identity and loss of coherence" (Selden, Widdowson et al. 2016).

This research by the use of Kristeva's pre-linguistic semiotic intends to show how the heroine of the novel by means of writings, poetry, and nature rebels against the mere obedience to the codes of her



social life. By use of Kristeva's symbolic pole of language, it attempts to show how characters are under the influence of dominant language, and how the subject by interactions between semiotic and symbolic is in the process of identity formation.

Research Questions

RQ1. According to the Kristeva's theory about subject in process what is the significance of art, especially poetry in Emily and Jimmy's life and identity?

RQ2. What is the significance of Kristeva's abject in relation to different characters of the *Emily of New Moon*?

RQ3. What can be one of possible answers for Emily's flashes in relation to Kristeva's semiotic?

RQ4. What is the significance of Kristeva's symbolic on shaping different ideas about one special subject by different characters in *Emily of New Moon*?

METHODOLOGY

This research by use of Kristeva pre-linguistic semiotic wants to show how heroine of the novel by use of writings, poetry, and nature rebels against mere obedience of her life. By use of Kristeva's symbolic pole of language attempts to show how characters are under influence of dominant language, and how the subject by interactions between semiotic and symbolic is in process so the identity of characters is changed. In relation to Kristeva's abjection, characters of novel faces abjection whenever their identity is threatened. Some of them are able to cope with abjection and keep their own identity, but some of them are in a pull and push process toward maternal.

Theoretical Framework: Kristeva's Semiotic and Symbolic Dimensions of Language

As a psychologist, (Kristeva 1989) Kristeva, unlike many other feminists, doesn't accept that biological differences make the women female but she believes that social differences are the center of changes between male and female. Lacan first mentioned that subject is made in culture and culture is made by paternal language. He even declared that subject by accepting lacks determines his/her powers and limitations. "Kristeva's idea of revolution both presupposes her acceptance of the Lacanian insight into language and lack (finitude) and chips away at the dominion of paternal law over subjectivity and culture" (Beardsworth 2012). Instead of accepting *écriture féminine* and woman's speech as a means to take us beyond patriarchal oppression, Kristeva maintains that women and men can get beyond patriarchal language and patriarchal thinking searching what she calls the semiotic aspect of language, and this semiotic should not be confused with the field of study called semiotics, which is the analysis of sign system in cultures.

Kristeva declares that the subject starts to get shape not only during the oedipal realm of father's law but also through the pre-oedipal realm of unity with mother. Although Lacan believed that after entering the symbolic order and learning language the relation between subject and maternal territory is disconnected, Kristeva keeps this conjunction between subject and pre-oedipal process by expressing new concepts for language. Kelly Oliver in *Portable Kristeva* expressed Kristeva's idea about subjectivity in this way:



Following Lacan, Kristeva maintains that subjectivity is formed in conjunction with language acquisition and use. All of Kristeva's writing has addressed the relationship between language and subjectivity. Kristeva is concerned with the places where self-identity is threatened, the limits of language. As a result, her work is focused between the two poles of language acquisition and psychotic babble. She is interested both in how the subject is constituted through language acquisition and in how the subject is demolished with the psychotic breakdown of language these limits of language point to the delicate balance between semiotic and symbolic, between affects and words. (3)

What she calls the semiotic dimension of language is that part of language that consists of such elements as intonation, sound, tone of voice, volume, musicality, rhythm, and the body language that occurs as we speak, which reveals our feelings and bodily drives. "The semiotic is the first speech infants have available to them—the vocal sounds and bodily movements they produce—before they acquire language and they learn this speech through their contact with the gesture, rhythms, and other nonverbal forms of communication associated with the mother's body" (Tyson 104). Kristeva's notion of semiotic and symbolic are briefly explained here:

Kristeva's semiotic, preverbal sign announces prosody, poetry's departure from prose, musicality and the unspeakable forces, energy and drives, which poets and artists strive to express in their attacks against and modifications of traditional forms; it announces the infancy of the child's relationship with the mother prior to language acquisition and symbolic separation (Smith 1998).

Kristeva believes that "semiotic purity is only possible in nonverbal signifying system such as music." (Powers 167). Thus, it is through the semiotic aspect of language that we remain, though unconsciously, in continual contact with preverbal experience, with our earliest connection to our mother. It is noteworthy, Kristeva observes, that both our instinctual drives and our first connection with mother are repressed by our entrance into language. Because language is the territory of patriarchy.

Outer Objective World: Kristeva's Symbolic Prison of Discourse

In *Emily of New Moon*, Montgomery emphasizes the fact that language is a very important device to form people's selfhood and attempts to depict it in different characters with different concepts about God, religion, and life during the novel. It is a patriarchal and puritan society where their old ancestors came only to save their faith and their children are still as strict as their fathers. There are some exceptions among educated characters like Douglas Starr and Dean Priest but they are rare.

The effect of 'big others' on discourse is depicted through the confrontation of characters with each other. It starts from the very beginning of the novel when the educated and intellectual Douglas Starr confronts an old and fat house keeper Ellen Green. Douglas Starr is trying to calm little Emily's heart and giving her hope to continue her life without her loving father. Emily tells her father that she doesn't like God and father insists on the difference between his God and Ellen Green's God: "Douglas Starr laughed—the laugh Emily liked best. It was such a dear laugh—she caught her breath over the dearness of it. Yes, you do honey. You can't help liking God. He is love itself, you know. You mustn't mix Him up with Ellen Green's God of course" (15). Through this confrontation, Montgomery focuses on the



effective influence of Emily's father's language on her character. In a quarrel between Emily and Ellen the difference between Emily's God and Ellen God is interesting. When Ellen asks her to go and "pray to God to make you a good and respectful and grateful child", she says that "father said I wasn't to have anything to do with your god. I know what your God is like. I saw his picture in that Adam-and-Eve book of yours. He has whiskers and wears nightgown. I don't like him but I like father's God." And Emily explains her God as: "He is clear as the moon, fair as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners" (19).

Kristeva by accepting Lacan's theories about subjectivity, considers the symbolic as a process where subjects face with rules and limitations of their existence. Children by entering to oedipal stage of symbolic learn to imitate the law of the father as the dominant culture. They learn the traditions of their society through the language of "big others". Little children of this story are under the direct influence of their parents' beliefs and ideas. Their knowledge and understanding of their society and its people are inherited to them by their previous generations.

Inner Reflective Essence: Kristeva's Semiotic

Inner Rebels against Imposed Authority

Emily's writings are part of her identity which she doesn't want to be invaded by others. She expresses her existence in her writings so her productions are part of her selfhood. On the one hand, she has to follow adult's rules in everyday life and on the other hand, she needs to have her own identity, so she is dangling between her inside world and the world of outside. In the realm of adults she should be flexible, and obedience is her only duty, but in the rebellious realm of her poetry she is able to rescue her identity.

Julia Kristeva discusses the complex process that begins when the individual enters into language. This process is considered by Kristeva as moment of signification. She believes that for the infant to become a speaking subject there must be a separation from mother. "This maternal presence represents Kristeva's semiotic, yet, because the infant has no language for the utopia of the pre-Oedipal state, it is always a lost country that can never be regained or verbalized – a concept that corresponds to Lacan's theory of the real" (Akers 2009). Kristeva's symbolic is a rigid system which considers meaning, signification, and the rational. However, the powerful drives of the semiotic always threatens to cut symbolic process through what Kristeva calls the poetic language like prosody, puns, sounds, and other evidences of the materiality of the text, which recalls us to the materiality of the mother's body in our pre-linguistic state.

Montgomery uses poetry as a way of articulation in both Emily and Cousin Jimmy. To use Kristeva's term, poetry in both of these characters is a kind of revolt. Emily who is under authority of her aunts, in her private, composes poems to rebel against the unfair situation of her life. She breaks the stable part of speech, which Kristeva calls the symbolic, to free her inner drives into her poems. The sounds in her poems are like pre-linguistic babbling up which for moments can give her the tranquility of unity with her mother. In her poems she is able to achieve her identity and satisfaction. Realm of symbolic is a territory where it is an emblem of her identity, a rebellious area through poetry helps her to gain calmness. Another time when Emily asks aid from her writing is in math class. Emily who sits on a chair in front of the window, wanders in the supernatural world of landscapes out of window. She moves from the



world of math to the wonderful world of poetry, where there is no sign of strict teacher and her boring classes Montgomery describes her dangling from symbolic realm to semiotic in math class:

Fractions were utterly forgotten—what had numerators and denominators to do with those curving bosoms of white snow—that heavenly blue—those crossed dark fir tips against the pearly skies—those ethereal woodland aisles of pearl and gold. Emily was lost to her world—so lost that she did not know the geography class had scattered to their respective seats and that Miss Brownell, catching sight of Emily's entranced gaze sky-wards as she searched for a rhyme, was stepping softly towards her. (140)

During the novel whenever Emily encounter with a problem and something unpleasant happens in her life, to endure the difficulties of her life she runs away toward writing. When her teacher, Miss Brownell slaps on her face and she is exploding of humiliation and pain, finding a bundle of paper is a miracle for Emily to save her heart. She goes to the attic and starts writing to his father:

Dear father—and then she pours out her tale of the day—of her rapture and her pain—writing heedlessly and intently until the sunset fades into the dim twilight. When she had covered the backs of four letter-bill she could see to write no more. But she had emptied out her soul and it was once more free evil passions. (82-83)

These letters to his father "Mr. Douglas Starr, on the road to heaven" are a great aid for little Emily and continue whenever she needs to be drowned in her imagination.

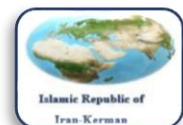
By writing letters to her father Emily renews the memory of him in her imagination. When her aunts decide that Emily is big enough to have a room for herself, they give her mother's room to Emily. After owning her mother's room, As Emily hasn't had any clear picture of her mother because she died when she was four, her mother initiated to get shape both in her imagination and her letters. After staying in room alone "she felt deliciously near to her mother—as if Juliet Starr had suddenly become real to her. It thrilled her to think that her mother had properly crocheted the lace cover on the round pincushion on the table. And that flat, black jar of potpourri on the mantel—her mother must have compounded it" (245). Then she shifts her attention to her letter. "And I'll always write the letter to you as well as father after this, mother. I am sorry I left you out so long. But you didn't seem real till that night I came home" (245).

She moves to a world which Lacan calls Mirror Stage and Kristeva names Semiotic Stage. These letters in addition to her poetries help her to pass and succeed great crises in her life. They get finished at the end of this volume of the trilogy, when she is mature and strong enough to continue without them:

But when she again tried to write a letter to her father, she found that it no longer meant anything to her. The sense of reality nearness of close communion had gone. Perhaps she had been outgrowing it gradually, as childhood began to merge into girlhood—perhaps the bitter scene with Aunt Elizabeth had only shaken into dust something out of which the spiritual already departed. (270)

Mother Nature

As Kristeva's psychological and linguistic concepts are concerned, one can notice the reason behind land as a woman. The semiotic stage of language is before the child adopts the symbolic stage of language. The semiotic aspect of language deals with the unconscious and child's desires and emotion. In the



semiotic state, the child connects himself with his surroundings. The mother's body, child's body and the whole environment are linked together and this state is called as semiotic chora by Julia Kristeva. As the child acquires language, he enters the symbolic but the traces of the semiotic will stay with him. The chora will be replaced by the symbolic realm of language. As the child enters the symbolic realm of language, he distinguishes difference between himself and his surroundings. However, the symbolic is always under the influence of both the semiotic and the symbolic. As the child's first place was his mother's embrace, then the child likes to be part of the mother's body again, but this time by gendering the nature as woman as "every space is the place of the mother" (Oliver 1993). The first environment that the child faces is the mother's body which is the semiotic chora. Therefore, the land is feminized as the person intends to experience the semiotic chora again. He intends to return back to the semiotic stage through projecting his desires to the environment; therefore, he feels harmony with nature and he can possess the nature.

Emily's interest in nature and her Romantic poetries about nature emphasize her attraction to the Mother Nature. She is a Romantic poet, she uses different parts of nature in her poetry and describes them. Her first poems are mostly about beauty of seasons, trees, flowers and charming views of Prince Edward Island. When in the last chapter, Emily brings her poems to Mr. Carpenter and asks him to give his idea about her poetries, it is shown that her poems are descriptions of different parts of nature. *Sunset*, *lord*, *Rainbow Joy*, *Wind Song*, *On June*, and *Ode to Winter* are titles of her poems. Emily is enchanted by the beauties settled in nature. When she goes out for a walk after staying in all the winter she enjoys her walk. "She loved the spruce barrens, away at the further end of the sloping pasture. That was a place where magic was made. She came more fully into her fairy birthright there than in any other place. Sometimes she shivered in her thin jacket; yet a queen might have gladly given a crown for her vision—her dreams of wonders" (292). When Emily enters the New Moon, first of all, she is absorbed by its beautiful natural views. She is enchanted by the magic of nature even when she is in the classroom. The views of nature are always a source for contemplation. She is so absorbed by nature that she forgets any other thing except the beauty of nature:

In Emily's eyes the finest things about it was that you could look right down into the school bush, and watch the old spruces where the Wind Woman played, the long, grey-green trail of moss hanging from the branches, like banners of Elfland, the little red squirrels running along the fence, and the wonderful white aisles of snow where splashes of sunlight fell like pools of golden wine; and there was one little opening in the trees through which you could see right over the Blair Water valley to the sand-hills and the gulf beyond. (140-41)

For Emily nature is sacred and is a permanent fellow for her. One of her permanent friends in her walks in nature is Wind Woman. She is very fond of nature that she considers wind as a Goddess: "I am going for a walk with the Wind Woman. The Wind Woman is going to be out in the fields tonight. She is tall and misty, with thin, grey, silky, clothes blowing all about her and shining eyes like stars looking through her long loose hair. She can fly but tonight she will walk with me all over the fields (5). This holy Goddess is described by Emily in nearly all scenes when she is attracted by nature. "The clouds of the West faded into grey and a great round yellow moon rose over the fields to be reflected brokenly in the pond, where the Wind Woman was making wonderful, woman lights and shadows" (109). In the



times of fun and joy with friends there is also this fairy friend present. "Tansy Patch is a very quiet place especially at nights. I love the twilight there. We always have such fun in the twilight. The Wind Woman makes herself small in the tansy just like tiny fairy and the cats queer and creepy and delightful then" (111). Wind Woman is as visible as her real friend during the moments when she is enjoying contemplation in nature, like a kind mother. "The Wind Woman swooped or purred in the tousing boughs above them—Emily had never been so near to seeing her" (125).

Emily's invisible world

Kristeva refers to the creative imagination and unspeakable drives as liberating forces which accelerate the subject's access to his/her identity. "Imagination is that strange place where the subject ventures its identity, loses itself down to the threshold of evil, crime, or asymbolia in order to work through them and to bear witness from elsewhere. A divided space, which authorizes destructive violence to be spoken instead of being done" (*Black* 200). Moments in which Emily has access to an invisible world can be described in this way. They reveal the unconscious desires that cannot be expressed in daily speech and they are related to the semiotic aspect of language. As Montgomery incites in different parts of first volume of her book, Emily has a brilliant power to see an invisible world. Emily calls them flash. Emily's flashes happen when she is very happy or she is in an unpleasant situation. The first flash happens when her father is alive and she wants to go for a walk after long winter. "And then, for one glorious, supreme moment, came the flash. Emily called it that, although she felt that the name didn't exactly describe it. It could be described—not even to father, who always seemed a little puzzled by it. Emily never spoke of it to anyone else" (10).

After the death of her father, Emily who suffers a great pain, her world is empty and no more beautiful, thinks that flashes are gone forever. But for her surprise, flashes are not disappeared and Emily is able to see her supernatural world again. Beholding flashes and their amazing beauty, gives Emily power to be stronger and tolerate harshness of her new life in new atmosphere. "It was the first time since the dreadful night when Ellen had met her on the doorstep. She had thought it could never come again—and now in this most unlikely place and time it had come" (25). Emily doesn't expect to see flashes again. "She had seen with other eyes than those of sense, the wonderful world behind the veil. Courage and hope flooded her cold little soul like a wave of rosy light" (25).

Emily sees her supreme world in different situations. On the first day of school when her classmates are annoying her: "But at that instant she knew she could write poetry. And with this queer unreasonable conviction came—the flash. Right there, surrounded by hostility and suspicion, fighting alone for her standing, without backing or advantage, came the wonderful moment when soul seemed to cast aside the bonds of flesh and spring upward to the stars" (72).

The flashes happen for the first time when Emily becomes the owner of her mother's room. She opens the lid of an old box in her mother's room. "When Emily lifted the lid a faint spicy odour floated out. The souls of all the roses seemed to be prisoned there in a sort of flower purgatory. Something in the mystical, elusive odour gave Emily the flash—and room had received its consecration" (245).



CONCLUSION

L. M. Montgomery has a great bulk of impressive stories, which attracts both young and old readers. *Emily of New Moon* is the first volume of Emily's series which are considered as Montgomery's autobiography. This volume depicts the turning points in the life of an orphan and how she is matured from a young sensitive and imaginative girl to an intelligent poet.

This paper uses Kristeva's poles of language semiotic and symbolic, to depict how the heroine of this novel uses her talent of writing as a rebellion against the harshness of her life. Emily runs away from Kristeva's symbolic world of authority to Kristeva's semiotic world of poetry to cope with the difficulties of her life. By the interaction between the patriarchal realm of language and the calmness and unity of the maternal territory, the identity of the subject is in process. By using her weapon of poetry, she passes great challenges of her life and establishes her place.

Montgomery cleverly depicts the effects of the language and dominant culture on shaping the subject's identity, which Kristeva calls Symbolic. The paper tries to show that in the light of Kristeva's pre-linguistic maternal territory, the novelist has focused on the ability of the artists to cope with the harshness of life, by using the musicality of poetry and dangling unconsciously to the pre-oedipal unity with mother. Emily uses nature and memories of her dead parents accompanied with her imagination, to tolerate the hard days and eventually achieve happiness.

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