

ARCHETYPES OF FEMININE CREATIVITY IN MARITIME FICTION

ARCHETYPES OF FEMININE CREATIVITY

IN THE WORKS OF

THREE

TWENTIETH-CENTURY MARITIME WRITERS

By

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Abstract

The ironic mode is currently a popular style of writing, as seen in the works being produced in the Maritimes. Three current Maritime writers who use this mode are Donna Smyth, David Adams Richards and Deborah Joy Corey. Though the works of these writers appear to be different from earlier pieces of Maritime writing, I suggest that this is not necessarily the case.

These three writers are all concerned with the loss of tradition and community strength. I will show this through their treatment of the young women in their works, through their relationships with their partners, their elders, and the community at large.

I also suggest that these works do, in fact, have strong ties with earlier writings. The women in these novels are ironic versions of Anne Shirley, L.M. Montgomery's beloved heroine. The romance of Anne may have turned into irony, but the young girl who tries to find a place for herself and her creativity in a rural Maritime region is still present. By comparing the similar events in the works of the late Twentieth Century and the Anne novels, I will show that, though Maritime writing is diverse, there is an interconnectedness in the writings produced from this region, regardless of the age. This allows for a universality in these various works that needs to be recognized as a significant contribution to Canadian--and world--literature.

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For M

*The real concern of the evaluating
critic is with positive value, with
the goodness, or perhaps the genuineness,
of the poem rather than with the
greatness of its author.*

--Northrop Frye

Introduction

The writing of the Maritime provinces in the late twentieth-century is not easily definable: its fiction is diverse as its writers bring to their work diverse experiences that have their origins in varying regions of North America. For example, considering the three writers that I am concerned with in this thesis, David Adams Richards (1950-), a native of New Brunswick, lives and writes in his home province; Donna Smyth (1948-) is a west-coast native living in Nova Scotia. Deborah Joy Corey (1958-), an up-and-coming novelist is, like Adams, a New Brunswicker, who now divides her time between her home province and the United States. And yet, although these three writers may differ in background their works have many interesting similarities. We get a sense of shared concerns in their works, and what we want to consider is what these common interests can tell us about Maritime literature.

I have been trying to place these works in some form of framework in relation to one another, as well as in

relation to the larger sphere of "Maritime writing".

Initially, what drew me to these works was an interest in the degeneration of the female figure. The women encountered in these novels have little hope for the future, and their relationships with other women, particularly with older generations, struck me as problematic. At the same time, though there was degeneration--the dissolution of the relations between the older and younger generations of the community--I also saw a potential for creation that was spoiled. There was something else that was trying to be expressed but failing to be so and so a comparison of the relation between degeneration and creation began to take shape. I gradually became aware of a pattern of degeneration and creation that fitted into my understanding of patterns present in works like Sir Andrew MacPhail's nineteenth-century novel *The Master's Wife* (1939). In this work we find a strong wife and mother who, in her day to day life, is an integral member of a valued family situation and community. We find strong women in Lucy Maud Montgomery's works--women like Marilla, Mrs. Lynde and Anne

in the *Anne of Green Gables* series (1908-1939). These women help to look after the farms, care for other community members and are active in local women's groups. The same can be said for Penny in Hugh McLennan's *Barometer Rising* (1941), for here we find a young woman embarking on a possible architectural career, taking advantage of the opportunities presented by WWI. Then we see a growing trend in the number of weaker female characters in more recent writing. Janice Kulyk Keefer discusses the lack of female voice in Maritime fiction in her article "Recent Maritime Fiction: Women and Words" (1986). Keefer recognizes the silence of the female characters in works by a number of recent Maritime writers (Keefer "Recent Maritime Fiction" 169).

This foundering of female characters is symptomatic of an emphasis on irony in literature in the late twentieth-century. This ironic foundering is evident in the works of such as Smyth, Richards, and Corey. The women in their novels are plagued by a struggle for power, identity, and creativity. They find themselves in abusive relationships;

they are emotionally depressed and dependent on medication to help them through their day. They must deal with abusive husbands, alcoholic family members, a struggle leaving them isolated from their own communities. They are uncertain of their own identity and potential: their marriages do not work out, their children die, and they show themselves ill-equipped to deal with the trials of modern life.

They are not the strong women found in Montgomery's Anne stories. L.M. Montgomery's romantic heroine, Anne Shirley, is the orphan adopted by brother and sister Matthew and Marilla Cuthbert, who moves to Prince Edward Island to find a family, a home, and a future for herself.¹ The potential for her life is not bound by anything other than her ability. She is free to find herself through her creativity and adventures, fulfilling her quest when she discovers that everything she wants in life is found around her, and that she will find happiness and contentment on

¹ Many critics are re-evaluating the Anne stories, which for years have been seen as simply well written children's novels. See Fred Cogswell's "Some Notes on the Development of regional Fiction in the Maritimes" (1985), and Margaret Harry's review of Janice Kulyk Keefer's *Under Eastern Eyes* (1987).

Prince Edward Island as the wife of Gilbert Blythe.

Her story is not without struggle and heartache, but it is, inevitably, successful. She enhances the community and the lives of others by using her talents for their benefit. As Elizabeth Epperly points out in her book *The Fragrance of Sweet-Grass* (1992), Anne Shirley is a character with whom "...thousands of readers identify...and are inspired by..." (Epperly 3).

Anne Shirley contrasts interestingly with the women in the novels of Smyth, Richards, and Corey. The possibilities that these women see for themselves are limited. They have no sense of their creative potential. If it does happen to be present, and here I am referring to the creative potential in the younger female figures, when this creativity is exercised, it appears either without effect or it may be used to the detriment of others in the community. Everything that is good for Anne Shirley is tainted for these women.² Any opportunities they have go

² The problem of identity and creativity is not solely a female problem. David Canaan, in Ernest Buckler's *The Mountain and the Valley* (1952) is a male figure searching for creative power within his own community. See J.A. Wainright's

bad, and the decisions they make have a negative impact either on themselves or on the people they supposedly "care" about. Among other characteristics of the post-modern, what we find in these works is the ironization of the Anne archetype.

Northrop Frye defines an archetype as "A symbol, usually an image, which recurs often enough in literature to be recognizable as an element of one's literary experience as a whole" (Frye, *Anatomy* 365). Frye suggests that these archetypes carry with them expectations because they are archetypes--they are the continuity of characters met in literature a thousand times before (186-187). Our expectations are qualified further by the "type" of literature in which these archetypes are situated. Frye refers to these as *mythoi*--comedy, romance, tragedy and irony--and suggests they are closely related:

The four *mythoi*...may now be seen as four aspects of a central unifying myth. *Agon* or conflict is the basis or archetypal theme of romance, the radical of romance being a sequence of marvellous adventures. *Pathos* or catastrophe,

"Fern Hill Revisited: Death and Isolation in *The Mountain and the Valley*" (1982).

whether in triumph or in defeat, is the archetypal theme of tragedy. *Sparagmos*, or the sense that heroism and effective action are absent, disorganized or foredoomed to defeat, and that confusion and anarchy reign over the world, is the archetypal theme of irony and satire. *Anagnorisis*, or recognition of a newborn society rising in triumph around a still somewhat mysterious hero and his bride, is the archetypal theme of comedy. (192)

In their interrelations, these four *mythoi* describe a circle that informs the study of all literary works. Frye argues that the lines between the four *mythoi* are not absolute. This means that a work like the Anne series is not simply a romance, but can contain elements of the other stages: tragedy with the death of Matthew and comedy with Anne's decision to get married at the end of *Anne of the Island* (1915). In the works of Smith, Richards and Corey, we find a predominantly ironic mode that is, nonetheless, spotted with elements of tragedy, comedy, and even romance. For the characters of the later works, though, irony implies doom, and in most cases failure. The use of irony as the principle *mythos* in which to represent question of creativity and identity, however, does not necessarily suggest a pessimistic conclusion.

We now find ourselves in an age where the ironic mode of writing is dominant. Frye argues that irony is best seen in contrast to romance, as "the application of romantic mythical forms to a more realistic content which fits them in unexpected ways" (Frye *Anatomy* 223). There are similarities between Anne of the romance and her descendants; however, the archetypal Anne figure surfaces as an ironic representation of the archetype within these post-modern novels. This shift does not mean that Anne's identity and creative potential are non-existent in the ironic mode: the act of creation is simply seen in a different light, and so is portrayed in the characters in a different way to that found in romance:

In pre-romantic times, we have the top-down version of authority, with the orderly powers above and the savage forces below us that we are trying to rise above. With the romantic revolution, those authoritative powers became alien and oppressive, and what becomes redemptive are the creative forces that we see as part of nature and part of ourselves. In our world we see power as alienating and threatening, so we embrace the disorder we see as part of a creative force that challenges and destroys that authority from below. Irony of course is always seen as more realistic because it articulates the disorder we perceive in the world and uses it to break against established

authority. (Donaldson interview)

So, if creation employs disorder, and disorder is found around us, we must use this creative force within ourselves, taking power and identity not from outside but from within, and then move this creativity from within ourselves to the outside world. Irony is a deconstructive force that becomes creative, and it is the search for inner identity leading to creativity amidst the chaos of the outside world that will be discussed in this study. The creativity of Anne Shirley is present, but it is manifested in different terms for the heroines of the late twentieth-century and their communities.

Moving chronologically, I will construct my analysis, starting with Smyth's *Quilt* (1982), moving to Richards' trilogy (1988-93) and finally to Corey's *Losing Eddie* (1993). As we shall see, the descent is already evident in *Quilt*, with the deterioration of relations between generations, male/female relationships, and in the lack of creativity of the younger women living in such an environment. In Richards we will find the process of

creation and identity in the younger generation, but it is a false sense of creation and understanding, as it leads to nothing but upheaval for those concerned.

Finally, in Corey's *Losing Eddie*, something like the bottom has been realized--there is an incestuous relationship and a narrator who has no name--realized, that is, so far as it is also a turning point where positive creativity and assertion of identity can begin. Amidst the deteriorating generational relationships and troubled communities, we will be able to see that the archetype of Anne is, nonetheless, present; moving with us into the post-modern era but reminding us of the age past, reaffirming her place--as well as our own--within our whole literary experience.

Donna Smyth's *Quilt*

Donna Smyth's *Quilt* is a novel about female creativity that revolves around the making of an actual quilt. The women making this quilt are middle-aged or older, with only one younger woman participating, begrudgingly, in the guild. The lack of participation in creation by the younger generation becomes obvious as the story unfolds, and problematic when we understand that the only way for the creative knowledge of the older women to continue is for it to be passed on to the next generation. This potentially problematic situation moves us toward the disorder of the ironic mode, but not far enough to allow for the process of recreation. As a result, the possibilities for creativity and the attaining of identity and power within the community is left uncertain for the younger female figure, leaving the potential for the younger women of this community (known as Dayspring) in a state of flux.

Sam Sanford represents an older power rallying against a deteriorating world. She is the force behind the

quilt, behind the gathering of the community women in the guild. Initially, many of these women believe that they are tired of making quilts, and that they only participate in the sewing for Sam's sake. "And some said they were tired of making quilts and some said they'd come and didn't. A handful of them came. Sam knew they would--if Sam Sanford asked them they'd come (Smyth, *Quilt* 8)." Sam is the foundation of the quilting guild, bringing the various women together to sew so that their creative energies are focussed on the unfinished quilt. The act of sewing is a more practical form of the creative activity found in the Anne story.

For Anne Shirley, creativity means making stories, stories that win baking powder contests (Montgomery, *Anne of the Island* 112), but her creativity must be kept in check, as she is driven by a powerful imagination. Her daydreaming results in numerous "misadventures". Her cake falls because she forgets to add flour as she is pretending that her best friend, Diana Barry, is "tragically" dying of small pox, so lost in her sorrow is Anne that she forgets to add flour to

her cake (*Anne of Green Gables* 107). She ruins plum pudding by forgetting to cover its jar to keep the mice out of the sauce as she was imagining herself a nun, the cover for the sauce becoming a nun's veil in her mind (108). Then, when Marilla comes in and Anne intends to ask her if she can feed the sauce to the pigs, she is already into another daydream and does not remember the mouse until Marilla is serving the plum pudding to guests later that morning (108), and she is forced to confess her negligence just as everyone is about to eat. Sam and the other women making the quilt are not lost in daydreams as is Anne, and so we encounter a different use of their creative energy, but it is, nonetheless, a powerful force for the women of Dayspring.

For one of the female figures in the text, her creative ability is expressed through the making of canned pickles, an art that she learned from her mother. Hazel Keddy, Sam's neighbour and one of the quilters, reflects on the different meanings making pickles has for her, including memories of her own childhood:

...when she was a girl...her mother's pickle jars
sat mysterious on the shelf, flashed like jewels in

the shadowy pantry. Each one to open was a treat...a churchlike feeling in it. It came upon her every time how mysterious was her mother and the making of pickles and how the two of them were one, her mother and the pickles. She couldn't think of pickles without thinking about her mother and when she thought about her mother, she came back to the pickles as if they could tell her, those jars of gleam and spice and vinegar, as if they could tell her something about this woman called her mother and what that meant. (Smyth, *Quilt* 9-10)

We see that the creation of pickles is something that links Hazel with her mother. These images also evoke ideas on the shaping of identity, what life is like as a woman--what will be expected of Hazel when she grows up--giving her permanent ties with the women who came before her, a sense of belonging, and a place for her creative potential within her community.

Sam partakes in a similar experience of creation and mystery when it comes to quilting,¹ while the quilt sits unfinished in her living room: "Without going into the living room she could feel it in there, stretched out on the

1 For an historical analysis of women and their creations, particularly with regard to hooked rugs in rural Nova Scotia, see Laura McLauchlan and Joan Young's "Reading the Rugs of Shelburne County" (1996).

frame, so many pieces, a thousand stitches..."(18). It is not the same type of expectation as that of Anne when she is trying to win the Avery scholarship or other school prize (*Anne of Green Gables* 240), but these women are not expecting public accolades.

This lack of celebration is part of the ironization of the story of the women of Dayspring; they might not be writing spectacular stories or winning scholarships, but they are creating in their daily lives. Their enjoyment comes not from the pleasure of others with their creative abilities, but with themselves: "...after [the quilt] was done it would be raffled off and someone would own it. That was fine. Owning was not the same as making it..." (Smyth, *Quilt* 49). It is this act of feminine creation and action that is essential to them and those around them, and when the quilt is finished, so are they. It is the process of creation and expression of identity through creation that is important, not the finished product.

Opposite to Sam's and Hazel's diligence is Myrt. Myrt is a young woman from neighbouring Hanover, living with

Sam because she has no family or friends, no one but Sam-- through social services--to help her escape her abusive husband. Myrt sits around chain smoking all day long, completely inactive:

It seemed there was no reason for doing anything, let alone old lady Sanford's work when she was supposed to be giving Myrt room and board...Myrt was tired...it was like getting out of bed all over again when the tiredness was in her bones and there was no reason to, no reason to get up. (77)

Myrt has no energy, no desire for any activity of any kind, no desire to live. This is in sharp contrast to Sam and Hazel and their husbands, who are always moving, always busy, always doing something (100, 107). Myrt sits all day long while Sam toils at anything and everything. Sam becomes so frustrated with Myrt's complacency, though it is Myrt who has sought refuge in Sam's home, that she admits to being sympathetic to Myrt's husband, the husband from whom she is running because of his abusiveness:

Not only did this one not work, she wouldn't talk. Might as well have a lump of clay in the house. A bump on a log sitting on her backside day after day doing nothing. But smoke.

When Sam thought about Myrt's husband, god help her but she knew his temptation to take a poke. Though there was no excuse for

beatings...Still there had to be something a body could do to get this one moving. A good swift boot in the behind? (20)

Sam's lack of sympathy is not simply one-sided. Myrt, for her part, cannot understand why the women are bothering to make a quilt, believing that quilts are out of fashion:

[Myrt] couldn't understand why Mrs. Sanford and Hazel didn't make something like...a nice shag rug which anybody could use instead of a quilt no use to anyone. Mrs. Sanford had told her that tourists paid good money for them...Myrt shook her head over the crazy tourists and the quilts. (52)

Myrt remembers that when she got married, her mother-in-law bought her and her husband an electric blanket, saying that "Nobody wanted a quilt these days" (13). Myrt cannot understand why Sam and Hazel bother making something that no one wants anymore; Sam cannot understand why Myrt has no ambition, no motivation, no interest in creation at all.

This is not the story of a young orphan bringing new life and vitality to an old spinster and her brother (*Anne of Green Gables* 240-241). The creativity has shifted from the younger generation to the older one. It is not the young Myrt who is full of energy and potential. Instead, the potential for creativity is in the hands of the older

generation--the dying generation. Myrt sits all day, looking forward to nothing but the "stories" on television, passively watching them as they unfold before her. The only time Myrt comes alive is at the mention of these stories in the afternoon (61) as Sam tells her that the other women are coming over to finish the quilt and that they can watch the stories while they sew.

While Myrt is busy concentrating on her "stories", she does not participate or even listen to the conversation of the group, a conversation itself full of stories and laughter and a shared sense of experience:

They'd talked a lot and laughed a lot. Laughed at silly things like Sam's friend, Dot, giving her a water pistol shaped like a man's thing for a joke. And Sam had squirted it at them and made all kinds of jokes like she used to...As the design became clear, so did all the stories....(48,49)

Myrt chooses not to share in this communal experience, an experience that becomes part of the women themselves, something that they want to accomplish together.

The women who had begun the quilt as a favour to Sam are now interested in finishing it, not for her but for themselves. When telling her husband that she is going to

Sam's for the afternoon to work on the quilt Hazel "couldn't keep the excitement out of her voice" (31):

Yes, it was really Sam behind the quilt...And it was like this until the quilt was halfway done, everyone had worked with a little smile that meant we're doing it for Sam. Then, when Hazel saw it taking shape, it reminded her, reminded her of her mother in another house flitting the needle in and out of another quilt. Then Hazel wanted the quilt done too.(49)

Like the rest of the quilters, she has become as excited and anxious as Sam herself to have it finished:

And Jeannie had felt it some way--she stayed evenings longer than she should have what with her menfolk phoning...When they weren't quilting, the others began to phone Sam to find out when they would quilt again. They wanted it done too.

It was their quilt now, a thing they were doing together and after it was done it would be raffled off and someone would own it.(49)

They share a common sense of identity and belonging with one another and with their community, understanding what being a woman in Dayspring entails.

This feeling of community is much the same for Anne in Avonlea, as Diane Tye suggests in her article "Women's Oral Narrative Traditions as Depicted in Lucy Maud

Montgomery's Fiction, 1918-1939" (1993).² Tye recognizes that when Anne and the other women in the community meet for a specific task, it is usually in larger groups, and "Often the women talk as they work..their work may relate to that of associations such as the Red Cross, or communal events such as quilting...[or] needlework projects (Tye 125)".

Jennie Rubio suggests that this is a way for Montgomery to use:

the metaphor of quilting to challenge many oppositions which she, as a woman whose fiction-writing was often seen as "frivolous," clearly resented: this metaphor blurs the distinction between text and textile, fabric and fabrication, the serious and the frivolous, the oral and the written, the frame and the subtext...the male and the female. (Rubio 172 [1994])

This differentiating of the male and the female leads to difficulties for both Anne and the women in *Quilt*.

These women must deal with the failure of their respective partners to understand the need for them to make time for such gatherings. As Tye points out, Gilbert associates women gathering in groups to quilt as nothing

² Though this occurs in later novels when Anne finds herself--like the women of Dayspring--married with a family, the ideas make an interesting parallel.

more than gossip sessions, where the maid will have to "provide several brooms to sweep up the fragments of reputations afterwards" (Tye 124). Hazel's husband Herb picks an argument with his wife over the fact that she is going quilting in the middle of the summer (Smyth, *Quilt* 33); it is irrelevant to him that she pickles all day long in the hot kitchen with a wood stove running so that he can save on the electrical costs while he goes to the cool mill (33, 67). Hazel is aware that despite the fact that she has been quilting for years, her husband will never understand the need, the desire that she has, to do it. As her husband complains Hazel tells herself that:

She'd tell Sam anyways, tell her how it was and what he said and what she said and Sam would understand on account of being a woman and the others would listen too and they would know, being women too, they would know a woman's life and what she has to put up with. (33)

These women are using their creativity for the benefit of their community--and their husbands. Herb loves Hazel's pickles, but fails to recognize that part of the same process that allows Hazel to create her wonderful pickles is found in the process of her quilt-making. It is within the

social activity that she finds the energy that allows her to continue with her personal form of creative expression in pickles (66).

Hazel and the other women realize, though it does take some coaxing to get them sewing again, that they need this time of female camaraderie and discussion. Here, their creativity flourishes amidst this small but diligent group of women. From their hands comes something that takes on its own shape, "Watching how it fit together, becoming something other than the pieces they held in their hands. When they looked at it, they saw it was fine and they were pleased with their work (49)". It is only once they begin the process of sewing again that they realize how important it is to them, that it is a part of them, a necessary activity that rejuvenates them as a group and as individuals.

Wenda Young, in her review of *Quilt* (1983), sees this creative power and understanding as a celebration of life and identity, the "differing capabilities of the characters to create meaning in their lives" (Young 130).

Young suggests that to account for the tragic outcome of the novel--the suicide of Myrt's estranged husband (Smyth, *Quilt* 115)--we must recognize the difference between isolation and community. "Those who are isolated do not survive; those who are in touch with the interrelatedness of living things, of the past, the present and future, carry on "(Young 132).

The problem with this argument, though, is that it fails to take into consideration that the younger generation, the one which will carry on when the older generations--the Sams and the Hazels--have passed away, is not involved in this community process. Hazel has two sons but no daughters, no one to whom she can teach the art of pickling using the recipes that her mother had used, and that had been passed down through the generations:

Her grandmother [Hazel's] must have made pickles in just that way, then her mother...made them. Now her. Who had no daughter to finger the yellow paper tucked inside the Women's Institute recipe book. Which was Hazel's one regret. (Smyth, *Quilt* 114)

After Hazel dies there will be no one left to carry on with the pickles, to make them in that special way passed on to her by her mother and grandmother: the loss of the

creativity of the women of Hazel's family. Sam herself will die childless (74). There is no one to whom Sam and Hazel can teach all that they have learned through their years of living and experiencing and creating.

The only young woman around is Myrt, she has no desire to learn, to understand, to appreciate, not like Anne Shirley, who is constantly apologizing for her lack of ability and qualification for household duties, but strives, nonetheless, to emulate Marilla and the other women of the community (*Anne of Green Gables* 153,161). Myrt cannot be bothered with such aspirations, referring to Sam as a bitch (Smyth, *Quilt* 62) and only participating in the sewing of the quilt because "they'd never let her hear the end of it" (Smyth, *Quilt* 102) if she did not do it. All the while, Hazel watches Myrt "pretending to sew", noting how girls "weren't the same these days" (114).

There is a gulf between the generations that seems impenetrable. What is taken for granted as values and duty for Sam and Hazel and Anne and Marilla becomes insignificant for Myrt. The younger generation that, traditionally, has

carried on from the older one is not there. The only potential young woman, Myrt, finds no enjoyment in helping the older generation complete the quilt--or in listening to the story of their lives, lives that they have always lived in Dayspring, as Myrt herself will.

And Myrt is alone. She has no female companionship. Her mother is dead (55), she miscarries her child (52), and her one friend has moved away (55). The only "kindred spirit" she knew has left her, moving away with her own husband and child. There are no solemn vows holding them together eternally, as there are for Anne and Diana (*Anne of Green Gables* 113-114). There is no group of young women on whom Myrt can lean, and with whom she can begin to find her own identity and creative expression. She does not want to be a part of the older guild, and there is no one else with whom she can create a younger group.

The future of the younger generation is bleak, and the trades of the older generation look to be dying with their present practitioners. The world forged by the older women will die with them. Their creative talents and trades

will pass with them as will their knowledge and understanding. With no one left to carry on the feminine creativity that Sam and Hazel and others share, there is a sense of foreboding for Myrt and for this small Nova Scotian community.

David Adams Richards' Trilogy

In David Adams Richards' trilogy¹, *Nights Below Station Street* (1988), *Evening Snow Will Bring Such Peace* (1990), and *For Those Who Hunt the Wounded Down* (1993), we are introduced to a small community on the Miramichi river in northeastern New Brunswick. Over the course of the story, we move through the life of the town and its characters over a period of twenty years. Vera Pillar, the heroine of the trilogy, is the Anne Shirley who grows up in the nineteen-sixties, embracing the sexual revolution and its fight against patriarchy. This struggle leads Vera to choose to abandon the values Anne cherishes. She is a female who finds her identity in the outside world, rather than within herself. Instead of trying to become a part of her community and enhancing it through her sense of self and creative activity, she attempts to re-shape her community in light of the ethos of the age.

1 For the purpose of this essay, the Richards' trilogy, like the first three Anne books, will be considered as one continuous story, not as three separate novels.

Vera fights against some of the longstanding values and traditions within her own community. Because she does not find any creative power within herself, instead adopting the fashions and trends of the dominant culture, her creativity seems to lead to more chaos, both for herself and for those whom she tries to "help". Like Anne, she sees her role as a teacher, and she tries to educate the younger generation with her "learning", a learning that she tries to pass on to the older generations through a book. Vera's efforts, though, fail to motivate her community in any way. Her education in university does not help her to recognize that her efforts, based on the chaos around her, can only be negative.

One of the first things we learn about Vera, once she comes home from college, is that she has an "ironic irreverence towards the older generation--because they had made mistakes she herself had not yet had time to make" (Adams, *Nights* 96-97). Vera does not value the wisdom and experience of the older members of her community and so she is as irreverent to her elders as Anne is respectful of

them. Anne Shirley adores Marilla her adopted mother, Miss Stacy her teacher, and Mrs. Allan the minister's wife (*Anne of Green Gables* 211). She desperately wants to please them, to make them proud of her accomplishments and this becomes one of her main sources of motivation: "I'll win that scholarship if hard work can do it...Wouldn't Matthew be proud if I got to be a B.A...." (235). Anne desperately wants to please those who have helped her through life, those who have taught her, given her insight, and tried to teach her wisdom.

Just as we found the generations in *Quilt* to be divided and lacking in communication, Vera and her parents are unable to understand the motivations of the other. Unlike Marilla and her brother, Matthew, who are continually made proud by Anne's achievements, Vera's mother Thelma is devastated by her daughter's behaviour when she goes to college:

...They heard a rumour she was dating a black man, and walking about town with him, arm in arm, which made Thelma insomniac...She said she would come home at Thanksgiving, with him. "You are not bringing anybody like *him* here--like the Belgian Congo or something...Think of your father...of

people here in town." (Richards, *Nights Below* 95)

Vera shames her family, Thelma believes, by behaving in a manner that is inconsistent with the values of her community. She is uninterested in conforming to the behaviour accepted by the older members of her community.

There are also distinctions to be made between some of the values of the older and younger generations in Avonlea. As one neighbour remarks about Anne's departure for college, "'I don't see that Anne needs any more education. She'll probably be marrying Gilbert Blythe...and what good will Latin and Greek do her then? If they taught you...how to manage a man there might be some sense in her going'" (*Anne of Avonlea* 333). But despite the community gossiping about Anne's aspirations, they are not appalled at her decision to go to university. It is not an issue that ends up causing a division between Anne and her family, as it does for Vera and her parents:

Vera stayed away that Thanksgiving, and on into Easter...The big house suddenly displayed in its physical presence that winter all the problems the family was suffering. (Richards, *Nights Below* 96)

In Richards, learning is not a matter of an improvement that

is congruent with family values, as it is for Anne.

Learning is something that compromises Vera's ability to function within the limits of her community, separating her from those with whom she grew up. The result can only be the opposite of the harmony Anne finds within herself and among the people of Avonlea.

We see this lack of harmony between Vera and her community again and again. When she becomes ill and must call on the local doctor, Dr. Hennessey, he arrives at the home of Vera and her husband, Nevin, only to realize that "he looked out of place, where he would not look out of place in any other rural kitchen in the Maritimes" (162). While there, he and two other community members realize that Vera's and Nevin's toilet is broken, and that Nevin has been trying without success to fix it. Without any manual like the one over which Nevin has been pouring, Vera's younger brother and his girlfriend's father, Joe, do manage to fix the toilet. The educated Nevin and Vera are completely dependent on those around them, on the "uneducated" community.

Frances Macdonald in his article "War of the Worlds: *David Adams Richards and Modern Times*" (1996) notes that Richards has been criticized for his seeming attack on those with higher education. Macdonald suggests, though, that Richards is actually angry with those with a degree but no education:

[Vera and Nevin] have degrees, and have picked up a mishmash of popular or conversational notions, which they espouse with a fervour proportional to the shock value of each successive cause, back home. (MacDonald 20)

Vera and Nevin may have a piece of paper saying that they have degrees, but they have no practical knowledge. Their education--or lack thereof--alienates them from their own community, and so they wander isolated amidst their own people: "Vera, though she is not an insider on the river, isn't from anywhere else, either" (21).

The gulf between Vera's identity and that of the other members of her community is an ironization of the corresponding relationship between the identity of Anne and her community which, as Elizabeth Epperly suggests, is one of "reconciliation between what the heroine sees as her

talents and her concept of home" (Epperly 11). Vera does not understand this need to reconcile her creativity and identity with the community in which she finds herself.

Not only does she fail to recognize her own alienation from the community, but also she fails to appreciate her natural surroundings. Nature itself and its beauty--one of the most important "figures" in the Anne books--are lost on Vera. Walking home one evening, she feels elated, and the narrator tells us that "She did not realize that she was feeling the greatness of the river that she was once again upon. The very trees and houses made her feel this way" (Richards, *Nights Below* 134). Vera fails to recognize that her joy has to do with her surroundings, with nature itself, and not with some sense of moral superiority gained through her having gone "away" to school.

Compare Vera's attitude with Anne Shirley's thoughts on nature and her new home when she first arrives in Avonlea, "Its beauty seemed to strike that child dumb. She leaned back in the buggy, her thin hands clasped before her, her face lifted rapturously to the white splendour

above" (*Anne of Green Gables* 21). In this young and relatively unschooled (39-40) child of eleven we find the ability to appreciate the beauty of the outside world. It captivates and exhilarates her imagination. Most importantly, she is aware that it is a beauty in nature that she is seeing, not something that she herself has created.

Anne never loses her ability to see and understand the beauty around her and its effects on her. Her own return from college is marked by vivid descriptions of landscape:

I'm going home to an old country farmhouse, once green, rather faded now, set among leafless orchards. There is a brook below and a December fir wood beyond...There is a pond nearby that will be gay and brooding now...There'll be love....(*Anne of the Island* 50-51)

Anne always sees the beauty around her, and she is able to find beauty in everything--and everyone--she meets.

Elizabeth Epperly discusses Montgomery's use of "nature descriptions to mark events in Anne's life. Montgomery's favourite image in the novel [*Anne of Green Gables*] is sunset..."(Epperly 32). The sunset or post-sunset descriptions come to represent or embody Anne's self-

revelation:

In all, there are some eleven sunset or just post-sunset descriptions in the novel, and each of these punctuates some important event: the recognition of beauty almost beyond words...the first sight of Barry's pond and the setting for Green Gables...after Anne rescues Minnie May...just before Anne apologizes to Gilbert....(32-33)

The intertwining of the landscape with landmark events reinforces the ever-present link between character and nature, identity and community.

This sense of self-awareness and perception of place within the community offers us another perspective on the ironization of the Anne archetype. Both women seek to aid those around them through their creative activities, both considering themselves teachers, though for Anne it is by education, and for Vera it is because of her university experience. "...[Vera and Nevin's] college degrees give them a position in the empire of the mind, functionaries with the power to affect the lives of their neighbours without access to the imperial seal" (Macdonald 21).

Vera's attempt to educate those around her in 'the ways of the world' begins shortly after she moves home with

Nevin. She decides that it is up to her to teach the younger generation (though they are but a few years younger than herself), to set them on the proper path to adulthood. This teacher/student approach defines her relationship with her brother Ralphie, and later with her sister-in-law Adele:

It was a practice of Vera's and Nevin's to separate Adele and Ralphie, so as to speak to them...Seated in a deep chair, with her granny glasses on, and looking (or trying to look) older than she was, she would ask Ralphie to sit down and talk to her...Then...into the other room he would see Nevin sitting by Adele, speaking to her, about world problems. Adele, her eyes big and wide, would be nodding. Then Nevin would turn about and look at Ralphie and smile. Vera would come out of her room and smile--and they would all sit together for a awhile. (Adams, *Nights Below* 136)

We can see that the ideas of ethics and morality are not the centre of Vera's concern, as they are for Anne, but rather world problems and the "bigger picture" motivate her didactic efforts. She is not interested in telling Adele and Ralphie how to communicate with each other, as that seems of little importance.

Ironically, Adele is at this time pregnant with Ralphie's child, and the full effect of those things taught

to Adele by Nevin are painfully evident:

She would look at him [Ralphie], and using the same expression as Vera had, she would say:

"Why is it, do you think--h'm Ralphie--that only women are interested in the causes of peace?"

"I don't think that's true," Ralphie would say.

"Men have created all the wars--and try to blow things up--HAVEN'T THEY?" (137)

And so the argument continues until Ralphie is defeated. There is no sense of balance in the male-female relationship. Vera, in embracing the changes taking place in the war of the sexes in the Western world in the second half of the twentieth-century, fails to understand the limitations that these new ideologies have in a small community, one that is reluctant to change and is protective of its traditional values.

Despite the immensity of her task, Vera attempts to

use her creative ability to challenge the gender roles in her community--the same roles that are reaffirmed in Anne's own story (Epperly 44). Vera, though, like the people in Avonlea, does not want an equal society. In place of a patriarchal society, she would create a matriarchy. The male-female relationship of the Victorian Age in *Anne* is reversed rather than renovated.

In the romance of the *Anne* books, as Elizabeth Epperly points out, the gender roles, and so the adopted identities of the male and female figures, are predetermined. This slotting of gender roles helps Anne define herself within the community, since she already knows the role that is expected of her. Her creativity is shaped to fit into this prearranged structure. Gilbert is the prince charming, as traditional as ever, and Anne becomes his princess. Anne may have started out as a young girl with an overwhelming imagination and creativity to excess, but by the time she becomes a young woman, she has modelled herself into the traditional role set out for all proper young women.

This shift is seen in Anne's choice of language, which changes from exuberant and flowery to controlled and decisive, suggesting that part of growing up includes altering one's creative activities to fit oneself within a particular framework:

There were other changes in Anne no less real than the physical change. For one thing, she became much quieter...Marilla noticed and commented on this also.

"You don't talk half as much as you used to, Anne, nor use half as many big words. What has come over you?"

Here Anne reddens and drops her book, saying that:

"It's nicer to think dear, pretty thoughts and keep them in one's heart...And somehow I don't want to use big words any more." (*Anne of Green Gables* 213)

Anne is conscious of the effect that 'big words' and supposedly idle chatter have on the people around her. She guides her creative voice into a structure which will enable her to fit in with the rest of the community; Vera uses this same voice to isolate herself from her own. Anne recognizes her need to control her creativity in order to remain within the boundaries of society, allowing her to gain the love of the handsome prince.

This sense of gender obligation is nicely demonstrated by the qualities Anne and Gilbert adopt as they mature. Gilbert, Epperly argues, represents what is supposedly superior:

...the world, work, knowledge, struggle, advancement, honour, strength, action, *male*; Anne stands for their supposedly inferior opposites: domesticity, pleasure, feeling, effortlessness, complacency, self-indulgence, weakness, reaction, *female*. (Epperly 44)

As the narrator points out, Gilbert sees Anne as his role model, as a "goddess", and:

She held over him the unconscious influence that every girl, whose ideals are high and pure, wields over her friends; an influence which would endure as long as she was faithful to those ideals and which she would as certainly lose if she were ever false to them. (*Anne of Avonlea* 221)

Anne is worthy of Gilbert's affections as long as she herself lives a morally "pure", traditionally acceptable lifestyle. What this implies is that Anne is qualified as a teacher, both in trade and in life, to educate the younger children of Avonlea into becoming model citizens and moral people:

Perhaps she had not succeeded in "inspiring" any wonderful ambition in her pupils, but she had

taught them, more by her own sweet personality than by her careful precepts, that it was good and necessary in the years that were before them to live their lives finely and graciously, holding fast to truth and courtesy and kindness, keeping aloof from all that savoured of falsehood and meanness and vulgarity. They were, perhaps, all unconscious of having learned such lessons; but they would remember and practice them long after they had forgotten the capitals of Afghanistan and the dates of the War of the Roses. (335)

Anne is the model teacher, this passage suggests, one who has accomplished more than simple factual knowledge. She has instilled in her students the idea of virtue, of morality--wisdom that will see them through their lives, not simply through their final exams. However much we may question this model itself (where students are instructed into the morality of their culture), what we recognize in the novel is a binding relationship between teacher and student and a sense of the importance of that relation to the community.

It is this relationship between teacher and student and between education and community that is lacking for Vera and Nevin, despite their college degrees. Frances Macdonald points out:

[Vera and Nevin] are the only ones gullible enough to believe Antony Garrett when he claims to be a WWII veteran (fought the Dieppenamese, those, and the Normans. Wounded and left for dead), though he was scarcely born when the war was over. (Macdonald 21)

We recognize that those whom Vera tries to teach will not be any better off--people like Adele and Ralphie, and the newlyweds Cindi and Ivan Basterache:

Once...Ivan went down to Vera...to deliver a parcel for Ralphie. Vera took...him aside. And, as if she were being watched by the obscure matron of those ethics Ivan knew nothing about, Vera spoke reverently to him about the position of women in society today. He caught only that glimpse of the hidden world where certain ethics were at war, which he knew, or Cindi knew, nothing about. (Richards, *Evening Snow* 13)

Vera's didactic efforts can only be unsuccessful parodies of the student/teacher relationship found between Anne and her students. Ironically, it is Nevin, Vera's partner, who has the degree in education and who has trained to become a licensed teacher. Vera has a Master's degree in English (80)--a higher level of education than Nevin, but not one that qualifies her to be a "teacher".

Whether or not to intervene in the lives of others

is not an issue for Vera alone, Anne's own actions suggest that her meddling in the romantic lives of others could easily have gone awry, as Elizabeth Epperly points out:

...Mistakes and misunderstandings could all too easily have spoiled people's chances for married happiness--these episodes turn out well, but only because some desperate resolution or freakish accident turns near-disaster into triumph. The possibility of missed opportunity or misunderstanding also...emphasizes Anne's necessity for soul-searching and recognition so that she can make the 'right' choice. (Epperly 60)

Anne is able to set things right, but barely, and recognize what chances are being taken when one intervenes in an already fragile situation. It is excusable behaviour for her in that she herself is not married--nor engaged at this point--and so these are lessons for her as well.

Unlike Anne, Vera is already in a relationship. She is not searching for self-fulfilment by "helping along" the relationships of other people. Instead, she is trying to re-create the relationships of others around her in light of her own "progressive" beliefs. Unfortunately, these relationships are not perfect situations to begin with.

Ivan and Cindi Basterache have only been married

for twenty months and already they are separated (Richards, *Evening Snow* 3). Ralphie and Adele, now married, have given up their only child for adoption and live with Ralphie's mother Thelma, and Thelma and Vera disapprove of Ralphie's marriage (10-11). In order to "help" in both situations, Vera persuades Ralphie and Adele that it is best for them not to see their child, and tells Adele and Ralphie that they ought to realize that they are separated by class differences (10-11), suggesting that they should not be together. Vera discusses Ivan and Cindi's problematic marriage while on television promoting a local transition house(47), knowing nothing more than hearsay about their circumstances. Then, out of concern for Cindi's well being, she becomes involved personally with Cindi and Ivan, helping Cindi's "friend", Ruby, to meddle in the lives of the Basteraches:

Together they while away a summer bullying Cindi into laying charges against her husband for the consequences of a dispute that is comprehensible only to the couple themselves, and further bullying her into having an abortion. (Macdonald 21)

Vera does not know when to call it quits, and meddles until

irreversible damage has been done to all concerned.

Vera's behaviour here corresponds with Anne's "meddling". In most instances, Anne is doing a particular couple a favour by intervening to help things along. But near the end of *Anne of the Island*, when she has unknowingly eroded her own chances for happiness, she nearly does so for others by intervening in their romantic lives (Epperly 72). One couple in particular, Janet Sweet and John Douglas, almost break up when Janet follows Anne's advice to ignore John (*Anne of the Island* 196-197). It is only when Anne understands that people must solve their own problems that she realizes that it is sometimes best to leave the romances of others to themselves. Vera, though, never comes to this realization, and cannot see the mistakes she is making by intervening in the lives of others, even with her own relationship unravelling. Vera is married to a man who left his wife for her (Richards, *For Those Who Hunt* 115), and shortly before the birth of their child, Nevin is caught kissing Ivan Basterache's sixteen-year-old sister and is labelled a child molester by the community, marking the

first signs of disintegration in Vera's own marriage (Richards, *Evening Snow* 178).

The romances have all soured--Ivan dies and Cindi remarries, pregnant again within a year, and Vera and Nevin are divorced. Ralphie and Adele are only happy once they adopt a child of their own, correcting the mistake brought on by Vera's meddling years before. We see the fragility of life and the tragedies that arise when people interfere in the lives of those around them. Vera tries to help Cindi and Ivan. Cindi ends up aborting her child and Ivan dies. Vera later tries to help Jerry Bines by interviewing him and writing a book about his problems--that he comes from a broken home and has gotten into trouble with the law (Richards, *For Those Who Hunt* 78-81). Vera writes her book, unaware that she misunderstands Jerry's behaviour(170-171), and Jerry ends up dying at the hands of another criminal trying to protect the other members of his community (210).

In the end, all Vera can do is move to Halifax to live her own life, and nobody else's. She never comes to understand her role in the deaths of Ivan or Jerry, or the

breakdown of her ex-husband, Nevin, by withholding visitation rights from him. Her didactic and creative activities have done nothing but impede the progress of those they were meant to help--"creativity" at its worst.

Deborah Joy Corey's *Losing Eddie*

Like the preceding novels *Losing Eddie* is a novel concerned with female identity and creativity, though in Corey, these ideas are embodied in a different way. Instead of dealing with the question of creativity in adulthood, the novel addresses the process of finding identity and the potential for creativity in relation to childhood. In Smith and Richards, the women have already found their identities and creative abilities or missed them. *Losing Eddie* takes us through an earlier process of the development and creation of self, those moments or situations in our lives that leave us with lasting impressions of the world around us, those things that make up our sense of expression and that help to define us as individuals within the community at large.

Corey's story revolves around a nine-year-old nameless narrator, who we eventually learn on the last page of the work is called Laura. We follow her through her ninth year, and witness her struggle to find her place

within a difficult family situation: her mother is plagued by chronic depression, her father is an alcoholic, her sister is in an abusive relationship and her older brother dies in a car accident the day he gets his license. Surrounded by so many problems, Laura has difficulty finding a space for herself, and she lacks the carefree environment of a stable home. We are also presented with the problematic circumstances in which her two young friends, Audrey and Marilyn, find themselves. Despite all the disorder around these children, we see their efforts to secure their identities and creative space, and through these attempts, different aspects of the ironization of the Anne story.

The act of creation for the children in *Losing Eddie* must be seen in light of their potential--the possibilities they see in others as well as in themselves. Laura's creative potential and that of her friends, though, does not come without struggle. Within moments of the novel's beginning we meet Laura's eldest sibling, Sister, driving into the lane with her children and her partner who

is beating her, saying to her onlooking family, "He's pounded my legs all the way here" (Corey 1). The narrator "look[s] down at Sister's lap; she is in a thin cotton dress and sure enough, all along her knee, round bruises have bunched themselves together like a cluster of old grapes" (2). As the family looks on, Sister's husband continues to hit her until finally her mother yells "not in my yard, not my girl" (2). The heroine barely has time to set the context of the story, or tell us anything about herself when our attention is drawn to the problems of those around her, in this case her older sister. Already the rest of the world has taken over Laura's story.

Laura defines herself in relation to the problems of others. It is her struggle to define herself against these influential forces that dominates the text, a struggle she and her two friends must deal with everyday. We see her desire for some sort of space and protection from the chaos around her with the prayer she says shortly after her sister arrives: "...I don't want Sister living here, Jesus..." (4). With the problems of everyone else to deal with, the family

has no time left for Laura, so that she is left feeling out of place and isolated in her own home:

When I hear her talk about staying forever, I shrink into my body. Mama will be all tied up with Bucky and Sister and her babies, and Daddy will stay drunk, and I'll be nothing. I'll be the shrivelled-up pea in the corner of the pod. Sister is like a long sticky flypaper fluttering in the wind and we are all the flies sticking to her troubles. (6)

Unlike Anne, Laura is not an orphan, and yet she feels less at home with her own family than does Anne with her adoptive parents. There is no sense of place or of belonging for Laura, even in her own home. Her sense of self, her ability to demand attention from others, has not developed. She is too busy giving to others around her and making room for their more "important" lives.

Contrasting with Laura and her inability to assert herself in her community is Anne's first encounter in her new home, when she is already begging Marilla to call her Cordelia, a name that she believes to be so much better than her own plain name. It is true that Anne is trying to find a place for herself in Avonlea, but with a sense of self

that is so strong, we know that she will have an easier time. Elizabeth Epperly suggests that the "delightful, young Anne Shirley is a self with a most distinctive voice; in fact, the whole of *Anne of Green Gables* is charged with the rhythm and energy of Anne's voice and personality" (Epperly 18). Anne's sense of self has already been established, unlike that of the narrator of *Losing Eddie*, who is searching for herself, for her identity amidst the crisis of the older sister, the chronically ill brother and the dead son's memory. There are so many problems consuming the people around her that she is not free to do any self-exploration.

Anne has the luxury of imagination, and she allows it to consume her. She is free playfully to muse upon the spelling of her name, imagining the way it is spelled when it is said aloud:

When you hear a name pronounced can't you always see it in your mind, just as it was printed out? I can; and A-n-n looks dreadful, but A-n-n-e looks so much more distinguished. If you'll only call me Anne spelled with and e I shall try to reconcile myself to not being called Cordelia. (*Anne of Green Gables* 27)

Anne goes on about her name, caught up in her own concerns and ideas. She is not forced to deal with the problems of an emotionally unstable family. Laura is so removed from a space of her own that she does not even think of her own name, as herself being somebody, let alone create a new identity for herself.

Furthering the contrast is the fact that Anne imagines lives for everyone else, as she would often do when still in the orphanage. Anne spends hours imagining the histories of the other orphans around her:

It was pretty interesting to imagine things about them [the other orphans]--to imagine that perhaps the girl who sat next to you was really the daughter of a belted earl, who had been stolen away from her parents in her infancy by a cruel nurse who died before she could confess. I used to lie awake at nights and imagine things like that....(17)

Anne is free to spend time in her own imagination. This is not the case for the young girls in *Losing Eddie* who are forced, prematurely, into areas of adult concern, leaving them unable to enjoy children's pleasures.

We see these children shouldering enormous amounts

of responsibility. Marilyn, Laura's next door neighbour, spends her days looking after her dying mother, spoon-feeding her fresh milk. When the family milking Jersey goes dry, Marilyn makes it her responsibility to see that the cow milks once again. She takes off her shirt one evening and rubs the cow down, and walks her around the field outside. In response to being flogged by her father for being "naked" in the yard, Marilyn "said she didn't care. She said Sadie had gone back to milking and that was all that mattered" (Corey 149).

Laura sees Marilyn tending to her mother, not seeing it as a burden on her friend, but as an opportunity for her to learn how "properly" to care for one's dying mother:

Every day, we watch [Marilyn's mother] like this and sometimes it makes me wish that when my mama gets sick, she could stay home so I could look after her myself...I would know just what to do for her, because Marilyn has taught me. I would get her fresh cow's milk and damp cloths for her head. I would find extra pillows and blankets and I would file her long fingernails while she slept. And on Saturdays, I would roll her hair in pink spongy curlers so she could look her best on the Lord's Day. (150)

The girls care for the older generation, those who would normally be taking care of them. The sense of responsibility these girls have for their families and those around them is admirable, but they miss the time they need for themselves to find out who they are, too busy playing nurse or guardian.

Often we come to feel that Laura, in fact, is too responsible, accepting responsibility for actions that she does not do herself. She blames herself for her younger brother's near drowning, though he was the one who swam out too far. Her sense of guilt is a learned behaviour, learned from her mother's example. Her mother is continually taking responsibility for the actions of other people. Though her son gets himself killed by driving dangerously, she tells Laura that it was she herself who killed her son (122). The choices that have been made by the other siblings are not recognized as their own choices, and their mother shoulders the burden for their actions, like an ironic Christ-figure, ending up in a mental institution (93) because of her inability to

deal with all the sins of the outside world.

This enormous sense of responsibility differs dramatically with the lighthearted youth of Anne Shirley, although Anne, too, has had her share of suffering and tending to other people, particularly the children in her foster homes:

I helped look after the Thomas children--there were four of them younger than me--and I can tell you they took a lot of looking after...Then Mrs. Hammond came from up the river and said she'd take me, seeing I was handy with children...Mrs. Hammond had eight children. She had twins three times...I used to get so dreadfully tired carrying them about. (*Anne of Green Gables* 39)

Once at Green Gables, the place she calls "home", there is time set aside for work, but there is never the urgency and unpleasantness of growing up too soon. There is no sense of guilt and responsibility in Anne Shirley that is prominent in these young girls.

We might consider the power of Marilyn's situation as ironic: "Marilyn always wants everyone to look nice, which is why she plans to be a hairdresser when she grows up. Not only does she want people to look nice, but she wants them to feel good, too" (Corey 147). When Marilyn's

mother dies, the narrator can picture her "beside her mama's casket [where she] occasionally fixed her hair and added extra blush to her cheeks" (171).

Yet Laura can see that this is not exactly the way things should be, and wonders if Marilyn cried over her mother, to which her sister replies that everyone knew that Mrs. Morris was going to die. Laura suggests that "...she was still scared of losing her mama...knowing didn't keep her from being scared" (171). It is as if the grown-ups have forgotten that these girls are still children. They may be doing more than is expected of them and shouldering too great a responsibility for their age, but they are still children.

The girls are doing their best to fulfil the expectations placed on them, moving prematurely into the adult world. But as Laura thinks about the circumstances around her, she feels that the adult world is not necessarily a place she wants to be a part of. We see this particularly in her view of adult relationships, considering the "wonderful" life her sister leads as a married woman.

The relationships of the younger couple in this novel are as problematic as the young relationships found in *Quilt* and Richards' trilogy. The difficulties in the relationship are not lost on the young narrator, who assesses the problematic marital relationship of her sister and her husband in her own childlike terms: "I remember Daddy's dark nest with its sleeping parts. If that's the look of all husbands, I'm not sure I want one" (174). Laura but makes her feelings clear in her own childish tongue: "...Oh, Sister, I hope your face is okay. I hope your man learns to keep his temper down" (3). Laura sees her sister being forced to beg their parents to let her and her children move home: "'Mama, I just gotta move back home. I can't take being scared all the time. I gotta get me and the babies out of that trailer before he kills us'" (6).

Sister is forced to find sanctuary in her childhood home, away from the dangers of her adult life. She must regress, back to the place she came from, taking from her younger sister the time that she needs with their parents for her chance to grow. Laura tells us that she goes to

church on Sundays, just to have some time alone with her mother, but even there she is forced to share her mother's time with her interest in the sermon (5).

The lack of attention paid to these children--their being left alone to take care of themselves--not only forces them to define themselves outside the family space, as happens to Laura, but it also fails to protect them from potentially harmful situations that are normally not an issue for children, at least not in Anne's world.

While visiting at Audrey's house one afternoon, Audrey asks the narrator "'Did you ever do it...Do it with a boy like big people do'" (125). Laura says no, and that she is too young, to which Audrey replies that her brother, Leon, does it with her all the time. She says that she did it before she was nine, so the narrator is certainly more than old enough (125-126). Audrey is in an incestuous relationship that no one is protecting her from. Laura, in her innocent wisdom, understands that this is not a positive relationship, and tells Audrey so: "'I don't think you're supposed to do it with your brother, Audrey'" (126). Our

narrator may not understand the complete relationship between men and women, nor the word incest, but she understands that what is happening is not good for Audrey, and not something that she wants for herself.

This kind of relationship is unheard of for Anne Shirley. Anne is in control of her relationships with the men around her. It is she who rejects five suitors (Epperly 64). Anne is completely in charge of the extent of contact she has with the men around her. She may not choose who happens to fall in love with her, and they do not always resemble her "ideal" man (65), but there is never any moment where she is threatened by the presence of a man. Sexuality is controlled by her and so she never has to cope with the problems Audrey must deal with daily.

This troubling relationship between Audrey and her brother touches on the disorder and chaos of the outside world that inspires a creative response. When Laura sleeps at Audrey's after Audrey has disclosed her incestuous relationship, Audrey reaches for a long knife and wedges it in the bedroom door to keep her brother out of the room. In

the morning when the narrator awakes to find the window open and the sheets at the bottom of the bed, she finds Audrey sobbing, lamenting her inability to "keep Leon out" (Corey 130). Her attempt proves that she understands that the behaviour is not something that she really wants. The wedging of the knife in the door comes to embody the desperate struggle of these girls, and in this case Audrey in particular, the struggle to protect themselves from the chaos without.

It is this potential in these young women and their struggle for independence that differentiates them from the older women in Smyth and Richards. Smyth's Myrt might try to escape her situation, but she spends the better part of the novel thinking about going back to the abusive relationship that she left. Richards' Vera has a space in which to exercise creativity, but manipulates that creativity with harmful consequences to those around her. The innocence of the children in *Losing Eddie* draws them out of themselves, toward the people of their community. This sense of female community and understanding, or friendship,

suggests the possibility that there will be a group of women able to support each other in this small community, and that they will become Hazels and Sams, creating a space for themselves and bringing order to the chaos around them.

* * * * *

Conclusion

This thesis has been concerned with the relations in three works of Maritime fiction in light of a feminine archetype, evident in one important example: Montgomery's *Anne Shirley*. We find elements of the ironization of this archetype in the works of Donna Smyth, David Adams Richards and Deborah Joy Corey. We have noted a particular focus of this irony in the search for creativity and identity in these works. Because we are in an age where the ironic mode is popular, the heroines presented to us in the later works have to deal with problems very different from those of

Anne's day; this shows us the evolution itself, between various modes of writing, from romance to irony.

Anne Shirley *is* Anne of Green Gables. She knows who she is and where she is from. Her sense of identity is strong and her creativity is abundant. She becomes a strong woman and teacher and is admired by the community at large, finding a niche for herself in her adopted home. The women in the works of the late twentieth-century cannot even find a place in their own community, let alone one that they adopt. Their sense of identity and place is distorted, and the heroines in Smyth and Richards leave us feeling that they are unable to cope with the world around them, and because of this, they cannot take the place in the community that the women in earlier literature have filled.

Corey begins her story with the same sense of foreboding, but with the assertion on the last page by the narrator that, "'my name is Laura...Laura, Laura, Laura'" (Corey 222), we have a sign of the earliest stage of coming into oneself. We see the potential for these children to grow into women who are able to take on the challenges of

modern Maritime life, becoming women who make a place for themselves in the world around them, despite the disorder they must fight in order to do so. This assertiveness is the least that we find in Anne. *Losing Eddie* lays the groundwork that Montgomery starts with, so we have a sense of recovered self-hood and identity. This assertiveness in Laura and her friends suggests to us that we will see, once again, heroines like Anne Shirley, women who are an integral part of the daily activities of the Maritime region, giving us hope for the future of these sometimes forgotten communities.

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