

Dr. Jekyll-and-Mr.Hyde, the Monstrous Cat: animal imagery, catharsis, and writerly production in and beyond L.M.Montgomery's Canadian WWI novel

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Readers unfamiliar with Montgomery's texts may not realise how unusual it is to find negative representations of cats in them; intersections of the uncanny in her texts are certainly more frequent than such representations. *Rilla of Ingleside* (1921), which holds a unique position as the only Canadian novel to focus on the female WWI homefront experience, contains by far the most extreme of any negative representation. It is hard to miss the tensions surrounding this cat: the housekeeper, Susan Baker, vows he is 'possessed by the devil' and the eccentricities of his double personality almost force the name 'Dr. Jekyll-and-Mr.Hyde' on him. It is also hard to miss his association with the War: the monstrosity in his reaction to the very mention of European tensions acts a harbinger of the as yet undeclared war, and he continues to be associated with bad news from the war throughout the novel. Though critics have recognised Dr. Jekyll-and-Mr.Hyde's role as a site of ambiguity (cf. Robinson, 'The Canadian Home Front: L.M.Montgomery's Reflections on War', 2014), the resonances of connections between his uncanny wartime ambiguities and sites of writerly production have not been extensively explored. My paper will first discuss the tensions in his image as an animal representing fear and division, proceed to examine him as a space of catharsis for women fighting war from a distance, and end by exploring how Montgomery continues and sublimates such complexities in her subsequent *künstlerroman*, *Emily of New Moon* (1923).

Christine Chettle has recently completed her PhD at the School of English, University of Leeds. Her thesis develops new interpretative strategies to investigate the partnership between fantasy and realist literature and social challenge in nineteenth-century fiction. Her work on fantasy has also continued through an exploration of psychic fantasy and the female literary marketplace in the *Emily* trilogy by Canadian writer Lucy Maud Montgomery, work on Romany folktale archives, and a new research project which will examine the representation of the long nineteenth century in twenty-first-century web comics/online sequential art. Christine's publications include work on goblins and social reform in texts by George MacDonald and Christina Rossetti, on serial illustration and 'social ghosting' in texts by Charles Dickens, and on working class women, aesthetics and WWI in texts by Montgomery. In addition, she runs an *Arts Engaged* community reading group which has been developing collaborative creative writing based on Lewis Carroll's *Alice Through the Looking Glass*. Christine has taught on poetry and drama modules at the School of English (University of Leeds) and also works as a copywriter for *Skené* and a reviewer for *Revenant*.

You can explore her work further at www.fantasiesofthevictorians.blogspot.co.uk, find her on Twitter [@cherissonne](https://twitter.com/cherissonne), and email her at c_chettle@yahoo.co.uk.