



# In the Interval of the Wave: Prince Edward Island Women's Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Life Writing

*Mary McDonald-Rissanen*

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Taking its title from a poem by Prince Edward Island poet Anne Compton, *In the Interval of the Wave* is a close study of diaries written by Prince Edward Island women in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Women from both rural and urban regions of the Island recorded their lives in a genre that allowed them to play with the conventions of the language they knew. For busy farm wives, their quotidian language, syntax, and choice of topic appear simple, whereas for the urban elite like Margaret Gray Lord and Wanda Wyatt, the erudition of their diaries suggests a more leisured existence. Mary McDonald-Rissanen argues that the initial reception of the text - its physical appearance, handwriting, gaps, and flood of words - provides interesting insights for understanding the circumstances of Prince Edward Island women from times past. Intertextual readings of the diaries alongside other cultural artifacts such as paintings, histories, folk stories, and songs embellish the idiosyncratic diary discourse.

Diaries enabled women to write their voices, create a subjective identity, and redefine their place in the world. *In the Interval of the Wave* exposes lives lived and recorded in a special moment and place never far from the rhythm of the sea.



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