

Spring 2023

The acceptance of womanhood: gender performance and self-actualization in L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*, *Anne of Avonlea*, and *Anne of the island*

Lauren M. Hinshaw
Eastern Washington University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.ewu.edu/theses>



Part of the [Children's and Young Adult Literature Commons](#), and the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hinshaw, Lauren M., "The acceptance of womanhood: gender performance and self-actualization in L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*, *Anne of Avonlea*, and *Anne of the island*" (2023). *EWU Masters Thesis Collection*. 860.

<https://dc.ewu.edu/theses/860>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Research and Creative Works at EWU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in EWU Masters Thesis Collection by an authorized administrator of EWU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact jotto@ewu.edu.

THE ACCEPTANCE OF WOMANHOOD:
GENDER PERFORMANCE AND SELF-ACTUALIZATION IN L.M. MONTGOMERY'S
ANNE OF GREEN GABLES, ANNE OF AVONLEA, AND ANNE OF THE ISLAND

A Thesis
Presented To
Eastern Washington University
Cheney, Washington

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree
Master of Arts in English Literature and Writing

By
Lauren M. Hinshaw
Spring 2023

THESIS OF **LAUREN M. HINSHAW** APPROVED BY

_____ DATE _____
Dr. Valeo, COMMITTEE CHAIR

_____ DATE _____
Dr. Greene, COMMITTEE MEMBER

_____ DATE _____
Prof. Rosenzweig, COMMITTEE MEMBER

ABSTRACT

THE ACCEPTANCE OF WOMANHOOD:

GENDER PERFORMANCE AND SELF-ACTUALIZATION IN L.M. MONTGOMERY'S
ANNE OF GREEN GABLES, ANNE OF AVONLEA, AND ANNE OF THE ISLAND

by

Lauren M. Hinshaw

Spring 2023

There is a pervasive cultural conception of what it is to be a woman, and in literary criticism that preconceived notion of womanhood becomes the basis for a majority of feminist critique; however, because of the particularities of human experience, gender is a highly variable aspect of identity that is reliant on both internal and external factors. According to Judith Butler, among these factors is the means by which a given individual performs their gender.

Performances that portray gender are not consistent from one individual to the next; rather, various masculinities and femininities can simultaneously exist as accurate representations of a given gender identity. Butler's theory of gender performance provides a unique lens through which L.M. Montgomery's Anne books can be examined; due to their place in history, Montgomery's books help pave the way for children's literature as we know it today.

Prior to coming to Avonlea, books were all Anne had to instruct her on how best to fulfill the expectations of society; every new challenge was an opportunity for her to mythologize the mundane as a method for working through the problems she faced outside of a community that she could call her own. Throughout *Anne of Green Gables* Anne's interaction with the prescribed roles of womanhood is largely influenced by the imaginary; although she longs for the beauty of womanhood she feels anxiety over the unknown aspects of transitioning away from her childhood in order to take on the role of woman. This anxiety continues throughout the next two books, and though Anne is treated like an adult by the community she inhabits in *Anne of*

Avonlea, her continued rejection of marriage – despite her desire for romance – demonstrates her position more clearly: she is not yet ready to give up the imaginary of childhood in favor of the real represented in becoming someone’s wife. By accepting Gilbert Blythe as her suitor in *Anne of the Island* Anne demonstrates that she has chosen to accept that particular aspect of performance into her own gender identity, and thus transition from girl to woman on her own terms.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
1. Anne of Green Gables	8
Anne as Outsider	9
Stray Woman-Child.....	12
Green Gables as Community of Practice	14
Mythic Feminine.....	18
Memetic Gender and Arrested Development	21
2. Anne of Avonlea.....	25
Avonlea as Exterior Society.....	26
Feminine Avonlea.....	28
A Full-fledged Schoolma'am	31
Real vs. Imaginary	35
3. Anne of the Island.....	40
Mythic Escapism	41
Outsider Again	43
Building Communities of Practice	44
From Girls to Women	45
From “Anne Girl” to “Queen Anne”	51
CONCLUSION.....	56
WORKS CITED	60
VITA.....	62

INTRODUCTION

There is a pervasive cultural conception of what it is to be a woman, and in literary criticism that preconceived notion of womanhood becomes the basis for a majority of feminist critique. Feminist thought has evolved since its conception in the late eighteenth century; however – just as Mary Wollstonecraft argued in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) – its foundational argument remains that society should include an equal place for women. The field of literary criticism addresses this feminist mission by asking the question of how women are represented in literature and what the further implications of that representation are.

Feminism as a movement is typically broken into three distinct waves with different goals in mind the first of these waves was categorized by a goal of expanding opportunities for women with a main focus on women's suffrage, and criticism of the time was concerned with similar pursuits. *A Room of One's Own*, first published in 1929, cemented Virginia Woolf as one of the founding theorists of what would become known as feminist theory; it was her argument that without access to money and a room of their own women lacked the freedom to express themselves absolutely as writers of fiction. Feminist theory however, was not only concerned with the field of literature and was often in conversation with theories presented by philosophers in the social sciences. For example, in 1943, Jean Paul Sartre published his principal philosophical work *On Being and Nothingness*; this text revolutionized the way the existentialist movement considered the human experience as Sartre claimed that there was an "authentic" way of being. In 1949, in conversation with this work, Sartre's longtime partner, Simone de Beauvoir, an existentialist philosopher in her own right published *The Second Sex* which famously claimed: "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman" (283). This outlook introduced the notion that

rather than having an authentic way of being, personhood – and thus gender – was a constructed experience owed to a variety of external sources.

Second wave feminism is commonly thought to have begun in the 1960s and was concerned primarily with sexuality and reproductive rights. Michel Foucault – whose work is now omnipresent in literary criticism – published the first volume of his *Histoire de la sexualité* in 1976 (*la volonté de savoir*), and followed it with volumes 2 & 3 (*L'usage des plaisirs* and *Le souci de soi*) in 1984. This history was largely concerned with Western civilization and its relationship to sexuality as a marker of human identity. While reception to these texts was mixed, it is important to recognize the impact they had in engaging other theorists in the concerns of second wave feminism by discussing how sexuality is influenced and shaped by the society it is initially produced by.

By the mid-1990s feminism had entered its third wave with a major push to destabilize many of the preconceived notions in regards to womanhood – such as body, gender, and sexuality; with this push, several offshoots of feminist criticism emerged this included the field of gender studies, which more broadly addresses the lines of division that have led to the inequalities feminism critiques. According to prominent American philosopher and gender studies writer Judith Butler,

[T]here is a political problem that feminism encounters in the assumption that the term *women* denotes a common identity. Rather than a stable signifier that commands the assent of those whom it purports to describe and represent, *women*, even in the plural, has become a troublesome term, a site of contest, a cause for anxiety. (4)

Alternatively, any attempt to classify people according to binary gender excludes the many facets that make up identity. Rather than conflating identities according to such a variable existence for

the sake of easy organization, Butler urges scholars to consider the different categories outside of the gender binary that complicate this method of classification.

The work of Judith Butler transformed the fields of gender studies and queer theory. Best known for their books *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, Butler challenges the preconceived notion of womanhood that was previously used as the basis for feminist criticism and presents an alternative theory of gender performativity. *Gender Trouble* addresses the problem of gender as a construct, which is that it cannot be defined in binary terms as had previously been the practice. Instead, because of the particularities of the human experience, gender is a highly variable aspect of identity that is reliant on both internal and external factors; among these factors is the means by which a given individual performs their gender. In order to address this problem, however, Butler enters into conversation with all those theorists who came before. In many ways, to cite Butler is to cite all of feminist criticism in some respect or another – for this reason, to understand Butler’s theory of gender performance it is important to consider the various factions of theory that came before. Butler engages with Beauvoir’s interpretation that woman is something that a person “becomes” suggesting, that due to that concept of construction,

[T]he body is figured as a mere *instrument* or *medium* for which a set of cultural meanings are only externally related. But 'the body' is itself a construction, as are the myriad 'bodies' that constitute the domain of gendered subjects. Bodies cannot be said to have a signifiable existence prior to the mark of their gender (12).

The question of gender thus becomes a question of semiotics. The body is merely a sign, open to interpretation according to various signifiers that take on new meaning dependent on an individual’s understanding of them. According to Butler, theorists fall into three factions when

discussing what the body signifies: those who define gender as a factor, those who define gender as a relation, and those who – like Beauvoir – “would argue that only the feminine gender is marked, that the universal person and the masculine gender are conflated, thereby defining women in terms of their sex and extolling men as the bearers of a body-transcendent universal personhood” (13). None of these factions are satisfactory to Butler, however, who instead asks readers to consider whether “being female constitute[s] a ‘natural fact’ or a cultural performance, or [if] ‘naturalness’ [is] constituted through discursively constrained performative acts that produce the body through and within the categories of sex” (xxx). That is to say, is gender considered natural because it is prescribed, or have we as a society constructed that very notion of naturalness? Butler’s theory of gender performance stems from this question. If gender isn’t a prescribed facet of identity, but is rather informed by the individual’s own interaction with society, then gender must be outside of the line of binary thinking by which it had been previously organized:

When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one. (9)

What this suggests is that gender is not so much dependent on what the body signifies, but rather on what a particular performance of gendered behavior signifies; thus it is not the body that determines gender, but the individual to whom the body belongs. Performances that portray gender are not consistent from one individual to the next; rather, various masculinities and femininities can simultaneously exist as accurate representations of a given gender identity. Butler expands, “If the inner truth of gender is a fabrication and if a true gender is a fantasy

instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies, then it seems that genders can be neither true nor false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity” (186). Alternatively, the social constructs that perpetuate expectations of gendered behavior renders gender itself as arbitrary in terms of how “correctly” one performs those expectations. The construction of those expectations thus undermines any belief in the naturalness of gender; instead gender exists beyond the realm of any truth and breaks from the hold of binary thinking.

Children’s literature provides a unique lens through which these theories can be examined. Historically, children’s literature – as we know it today – did not emerge as a genre until the Victorian era; prior to this point children’s stories were relegated to the property of fables and folklore. Due to the structural shifts society faced in the wake of the industrial revolution, however, there were policy changes that – for perhaps the first time – recognized the existence of children and sought to provide them legal protections; along with those legal protections, however, children were also recognized as an untapped demographic to whom the literary market could appeal and children’s literature was born.

Victorian authors paved the way for the genre of children’s literature by writing seemingly simple stories about what it is like to be a child in a world that predominantly caters to adults. By writing for the child audience, authors were led to address the various experiences of childhood and its trappings. Montgomery herself published the first of her Anne books in 1908 just after the end of the Victorian era and thus contributed to the early development of the genre with special care taken to write a character that could have believably existed in the environs of Prince Edward Island. Montgomery herself had been born and raised by her maternal grandparents Alexander and Lucy Macneill on the island, and the believability of Anne Shirley is thus firmly rooted in the truth of Montgomery’s own childhood experiences.

Anne's believability as a girl – and later as a young woman – is reliant on the way Montgomery addresses the subject of gender and its societally-enforced roles; because of this, the Anne books offer interesting insight into the ways in which children's literature can demonstrate Butler's theory of gender performance. I am not the first – nor am I likely to be the last – to address the topic of gender in Montgomery's Anne series; many papers have been published on topics relating to how gender is portrayed by these books. In 2001 Julia McQuillan and Julie Pfeiffer published their essay "Why Anne Makes us Dizzy: Reading *Anne of Green Gables* from a Gender Perspective" which applied Barbara Risman's theory of Gender – as conceptualized in *Gender Vertigo* – to the first of Montgomery's Anne books; where McQuillan and Pfeiffer aimed to uncover the "gender regimes" present in *Anne of Green Gables* with their application of Risman, however, it is my goal to address what Anne's performance of gender demonstrates about her ability to achieve self-actualization, and it is for this reason that I have chosen to apply the work of Judith Butler to the first three books of Montgomery's series. Throughout these texts one of the main roles of womanhood that Anne is deliberating on as she transitions from girl to woman is the role of wife.

Anne's initial position within the narrative is situated firmly outside of the social structures which enforce particular presentations of gender, and – like any other child – Anne has to undergo the process of inculcation into a society where expectations of gender can be taught. Once this process has occurred, Anne is able to observe the different performances of womanhood that are modeled to her and choose whether to accept or reject various elements of those performances as she constructs her own gender identity. Before this process occurs, however, Anne has supplemented her lack of community – and the appropriate models of performance that come with it – with the examples available to her in literature. Prior to coming

to Avonlea, books were all Anne had to instruct her on how best to fulfill the expectations of society; every new challenge was an opportunity for her to mythologize the mundane as a method for working through the problems she faced outside of a community that she could call her own. Anne's initial position as an outsider is thus doubly important: first, it allows children – who are to some degree uninitiated like Anne – to see what the process of joining society looks like; second, it highlights the importance of Anne's being accepted into the communities of Green Gables, Avonlea, and eventually Prince Edward Island as a whole.

Throughout *Anne of Green Gables* Anne's gender performance – and interaction with the prescribed roles of womanhood – is largely influenced by the imaginary. Anne imagines womanhood into the very nature that surrounds her and she sees the long white veil of a bride in the petals of a flowering tree. Anne is simultaneously enraptured by the potential of this imagined future for herself and scared of its inevitability; although she longs for the beauty of womanhood – as seen in her reading – she feels anxiety over the unknown aspects of transitioning away from her childhood in order to take on the role of woman. This anxiety continues throughout the next two books, and though Anne is treated like an adult by the community she inhabits in *Anne of Avonlea*, her continued rejection of marriage – despite her desire for romance – demonstrates her position more clearly: she is not yet ready to give up the imaginary of childhood in favor of the real represented in becoming someone's wife. It is precisely this unwillingness that makes her eventual acceptance of Gilbert's proposal in *Anne of the Island* so compelling; by accepting him Anne demonstrates that she has chosen to accept that particular aspect of performance into her own gender identity, and thus transition from girl to woman on her own terms.

1. Anne of Green Gables

In claiming that women are not born but instead undergo process to become that gendered class, Beauvoir indirectly makes the argument that gender is a constructed element of human identity and thus varies from one individual to the next. This variation makes gender ultimately indefinable; however, despite the indefinable nature of womanhood, 'women' are often categorized according to their generation providing such distinctions as between 'women' and 'girls.' The generational divide of womanhood is especially useful when discussing the way gender is cyclically constructed within a society; three categories emerge from this discussion: mothers, peers, and children.

According to Carrie Paechter, Director of the Nottingham Centre for Children, Young People and Families, the construction of gender is reliant on being within a community that can inform appropriate gender presentation: "Our various masculinities and femininities are constructed as ways of being within communities of masculinity and femininity practice, and are likely to change as we move between these communities" (14). Communities of practice thus exist as subsections of broader human society; they incorporate the various ideals of the members to provide clear expectations of how gender ought to be performed within the confines of that given community. In the cycle of human development, gender expression begins to emerge in childhood; however, Paechter specifies that "[c]ognitive awareness is central to the understanding of oneself within a community of practice" (43). For this reason, the time in a child's life when they reach this stage can vary depending on the individual in question.

When considering the formation of gender identity in children it is important to look to what forms of media those children are interacting with. As scholars of literature know, literature operates as an extension of the society that produces it; by reflecting the ideals of that society or

community of practice literature can act as a metric by which individuals gauge how well they conform to the standards of their chosen society. Because of the way literature functions in general, the role of children's literature is especially important in maintaining societal expectations. Once cognizant of their position within a community of practice, children begin to experiment with the examples available to them in order to develop their own identity; this experimentation and mimicry of role models extends to those they read about in books. *Anne of Green Gables* demonstrates this both as an example of children's literature and through the way the character Anne Shirley develops her identity within the text.

Anne as Outsider

According to the framework established by Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, gender is an inherently performative act that relies on the subject to engage in behavioral repetition according to the subject's socialization based on the label ascribed to them. Thus, gender is not a matter of nature versus nurture but rather a cooperation of the two to construct the whole of an identity. The first book of Montgomery's Anne series, *Anne of Green Gables*, demonstrates the cycle of gender performance through the ways in which 'women' instruct 'girls' – like Anne – on how to behave. From the outset, Anne Shirley exists outside of the pre-established norms of gender expression; her inculcation into Avonlea society – and the gendered expectations placed upon her there – demonstrates the construction of gender identity through a process of trying on various elements of gender expression. Prior to Anne's arrival in Avonlea her existence was centered outside of the gendered communities of practice Paechter identifies, and instead she was passed from household to household, more like an unwanted belonging than a little girl. Butler identifies the root cause for dehumanization – such

as Anne faces prior to her acceptance into a community of practice – as a lack of gendered distinction:

The mark of gender appears to ‘qualify’ bodies as human bodies; the moment in which an infant becomes humanized is when the question, ‘is it a boy or a girl?’ is answered. Those bodily figures who do not fit into either gender fall outside the human, indeed, constitute the domain of the dehumanized and the abject against which the human itself is constituted. (151)

Due to Anne’s lack of community before she came to Green Gables, she had neither direct instruction nor a model to whom she could look for guidance on gender performance; instead, she was outside of the conception of gender roles and thus unable to perform gender in any particular manner.

Communities of practice operate under the idea that identity is influenced by external forces. The problem of Anne’s position outside of these communities becomes apparent through the disruption her presence causes. Perhaps one of the most famous lines in the Anne series comes to pass when Anne realizes that the Cuthberts had intended to adopt a boy, and not a girl: “‘You don’t want me!’ she cried. ‘You don’t want me because I’m not a boy! I might have expected it’” (23). This reaction – in all of its drama and despair – indicates to the reader two things: first, that this is not the first time Anne has failed to live up to the preconceived expectations of those around her; and second, that she takes umbrage with that. After all, to someone existing outside of a community of practice there is no example to measure oneself against, and by this metric she has been set up to fail. It is only later, however, that we begin to see how Anne’s understanding of gender differs from those within the dominant society. When Marilla instructs Anne to behave “as a good girl should” Anne replies “I’ll try to do and be

anything you want me, if you'll only keep me" (47). To Anne, the whole of her trouble is rooted in the fact that she isn't what the Cuthberts had anticipated when they sent for an orphan, but she can just as easily become what they want if they will only tell her what that is. Anne thus desires Marilla's instruction on how to fit into her chosen community of practice, and reacts to the way she is treated as a girl in order to solidify her gender identity. Paechter's description of the generational cycle intrinsic to the cultivation of gender expression explains Anne's reactionary behavior: "Boys and girls are believed to be different by parents, siblings and carers, and so are treated differently, in a myriad of ways, from the moment of their naming as members of a particular community of masculinity or femininity practice" (44). This idea that gendered behavior is the result of external forces acting on the individual has its foundation in post-Freudian thought known as Object Relations Theory, which argues that in child development the emphasis should not be placed on biological impulses when determining behavioral patterns, but rather on the way "objects" – here meaning things experienced by the subject – train certain responses into a person. In the 1970s, this school of thought captured the attention of two feminist theorists, psychologist Dorothy Dinnerstein and sociologist Nancy Chodorow, who wrote on the way object relations theory could be applied to gendered behavior and the roles men and women assume as a result of those behaviors. Dinnerstein and Chodorow argued that the difference between men and women is not biological and instead is due to the fact that women are raised by their mothers to conform to standards set by a patriarchal society.

By applying the scholarship of Dinnerstein and Chodorow to *Anne of Green Gables*, the prevailing social structures become clear, and though Anne is unused to the expected behaviors within communities of practice, her unfamiliarity with these structures does not exclude her from their customs. Dinnerstein identified of the cyclical nature of gender identity that "[a] girl, like a

boy, must model herself after the parent of the same sex in some central respects, and then renounce dependence on that parent, establishing status as an equal and autonomous being” (84). Anne’s ambition of being accepted into Green Gables’ community of practice hinges on her ability to effectively model herself after the instructions Marilla provides for her; she must to some degree give up her individuality for the sake of forming her identity. That is, as an outsider Anne’s gender-specific behaviors went unpoliced, and it is through her connection to Marilla that she transitions from an existence as little more than an unwanted belonging to a girl who will eventually become a young woman herself. Anne’s treatment at the hands of Mrs. Thomas and Mrs. Hammond prior to her arrival in Avonlea is a key part of what convinces Marilla to allow Anne to remain at Green Gables. When she questions Anne over the treatment she received and whether those women had been “good” to Anne, Anne replies that she “feel[s] sure they meant to be good to [her]” (41), the implication of course being that they had failed to do so. With that realization, Marilla considers all that she knows of Anne and determines that “she might be trained out of [her bad habits]” (41). This determination makes it easier for Marilla to claim Anne as her own responsibility and welcome her into the domestic sphere of Green Gables where she can begin to construct her own social identity as a little girl.

Stray Woman-Child

Gender construction relies on, and is informed by, external sources within a given community of practice. Precisely what the terms ‘man’ and ‘woman’ signify are determined by a sort of cultural DNA. In an interview given in 2021 Butler said of this, “[W]e are constructed, meaning that we are determined by culture or society in ways over which we have no control.” This is not to say however, that we are trapped by the gendered expectations placed upon us, rather that we can play with those expectations as we experiment with gender performativity as

Butler went on to say: “[W]e are both culturally constrained and to some degree free, and gender is a site where we feel that.” Within the model of cyclical gender construction this paper supposes to be true, children represent the uninitiated stage, and those children labeled ‘girl’ represent the canvas on which their mothers and peers can paint. Children learn appropriate gender expression through the observation and imitation of the other two groups, and construct their identities according to the responses their imitations receive.

At the very earliest stages of Anne’s story she exists in something of a gender limbo where she is both and neither, where the Cuthberts can simultaneously keep her and send her away. In a very literal sense, the child they anticipate does not fit their predetermined expectations of gender, and after she has been brought to Green Gables their discussion of what to do with her is presented by Montgomery in ungendered terms. Anne is stripped of any gender potentially ascribed by previous communities of practice and referred to as simply “the child” until Marilla asks her for her name (23-4). By separating Anne from her gender in this way, Montgomery invites scholars to examine the function of gender in children’s literature; this is because the protagonist is often meant to operate as a “stand-in” for the child reader through whom they can learn lessons about growing up. Anne’s transitions through the various stages of womanhood thus demonstrate the full cycle of gender performance beginning in the uninitiated stage before cognition. In fact, the version of Anne presented in *Anne of Green Gables* is firmly rooted in childhood for the first half of the book. She exists mostly in the privacy of the Cuthberts’ home – a closed community in which Marilla can begin her instruction – and it is only in the later chapters that she begins to form a peer group at school.

Anne’s transition from childhood to adulthood takes a different path than the others in her peer group because of her initial role as an outsider with no community of practice. From the

outset, Anne is perceived by those within Avonlea society as a child who has somehow ended up on an unintended trajectory. Montgomery even goes so far as to identify Anne as a “stray woman-child” when Matthew Cuthbert first meets her at the train station, and that phrase takes on a dual purpose (11). It’s first purpose is to identify Anne as being one of the “mysterious creatures” of whom Matthew is afraid (9); because she is a girl she is destined to grow up into a woman. Secondly, however, this label indicates that Anne has gone off course according to the standard set by society; though she is destined to be a woman the manner in which she performs her gender is altered enough that she is almost immediately considered by Matthew as safe – making her one of three ‘women’ he considers to be thus. What is most compelling about this descriptor of Montgomery’s however, is the fact that the term “stray woman-child” remains the determining factor of Anne’s identity throughout the whole of *Anne of Green Gables*.

Green Gables as Community of Practice

Within broader society, communities of practice exist in both interior and exterior spaces. In each of her Anne books, Montgomery positions Anne in terms of the dominant society she occupies; this can be seen through the way Green Gables functions as the site where Anne is first accepted into a community of practice in *Anne of Green Gables*. Due to the domestic nature of Green Gables as a community of practice Anne is allowed a degree of privacy – which she would not have otherwise had – as she transitions from her initial status as an outsider to a member of society who must learn the appropriate behaviors associated with this new position. At least, that should have been the case. As we see in the ninth chapter, Mrs. Lynde disregards the privacy Anne had been utilizing up to that point to learn what behaviors Marilla deemed appropriate for a little girl, and she is thus horrified by Anne’s lack of – what *she* deems – appropriate composure when face to face with her.

“Well, I don’t envy you your job bringing *that* up, Marilla,” said Mrs. Rachel with unspeakable solemnity.

Marilla opened her lips to say she knew not what of apology or deprecation. What she did say was a surprise to herself then and ever afterwards.

“You shouldn’t have twitted her about her looks, Rachel.” (65)

Marilla’s response to Mrs. Lynde here demonstrates the hierarchy present in these two communities of practices at such an important time in Anne’s development. Where, prior to taking Anne in, Marilla would have felt compelled to apologize for a lack of composure and respect that negatively affected a guest in her home, it is with her own elevation as the head of a domestic – interior – community of practice that Marilla’s motivations shift. Instead of asking her friend to forgive the slight Anne has inflicted, she steps up in order to defend the child in her care who she knows is not yet prepared for exterior society. Marilla – just as much as Anne – is thrown by the emergence of their community of practice and struggles to step fully into her new role as Anne’s mother. In her book *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*, Chodorow identified of interior – domestic – society: “Mothers and children form the core of domestic organization; domestic ties are based on specific particularistic relationships among people and are assumed to be natural and biological” (9). What this suggests is that though Marilla is surprised by the shift in her own motivations when it comes to Anne, they merely fulfill the natural relationship produced by society. Marilla, as the adult woman in Green Gables’ community of practice is expected to fulfill the role of mother in Anne’s life, just as every other adult woman throughout Avonlea is expected to do for the collective children of the village.

In some respects, Marilla is uniquely suited to the role of Anne's mother because of her own existence outside of the larger community of practice of Avonlea. However, Marilla is not an outsider in the same sense that Anne was; rather her relation to society is that of someone who was brought up with all the expectations of her role as a woman within the exterior community but failed to fulfill those expectations and returned to a predominantly interior existence. Both Matthew and Marilla are seen by the community of Avonlea as rather odd. Mrs. Lynde describes their existence at Green Gables as "just *staying*" rather than living (3). This distinction between living and staying is more clearly expressed through Montgomery's own description of her character: "She looked like a woman of narrow experience and rigid conscience, which she was; but there was a saving something about her mouth which, if it had been ever so slightly developed, might have been considered indicative of a sense of humor" (5). Marilla's narrow experience is precisely what indicates her existence outside of exterior society; though she has been taught everything about what it is to be a woman in Avonlea, she remains in a very literal sense on the fringes of that society. In fact, it is her interaction with Anne that ultimately propels her back into the public sphere as she attempts to prepare her for her own emergence into exteriority.

As Anne progressively becomes more prepared for joining exterior society, Marilla introduces her incrementally through controlled environments around Avonlea; the first place Marilla planned to do this was at Sunday School in Avonlea church. However, when Sunday arrived Marilla was unable to take Anne herself, and instead intended to entrust her to the care of another mothering figure who had already inserted herself into their domestic sphere. Unfortunately, Mrs. Rachel Lynde – unaware of this intention – had already made her way to Avonlea church. Anne proceeded into exterior society without the protection of a guide who

could model appropriate behavior for her and thus arrived at Sunday School “liberally garlanded” with flowers and her prospective peers were unsure of her appearance: “[n]obody made any friendly advances” toward her (80). Anne’s ability to progress from interior to exterior in terms of society is entirely dependent on a trusted individual ushering her into that new community of practice. Without a guide to claim her as an extension of the broader society that is Avonlea village, Anne is once again forced to observe from outside with no one to whom she can address her questions concerning how things are done and how she should behave. When Marilla asked her how she conducted herself in this new environment and made to critique her behavior, Anne’s response reflects the effect this lack of guidance has on her experience of such unfamiliar territory: “I don't think it was fair for [the teacher] to do all the asking. There were lots I wanted to ask [the Sunday school teacher], but I didn't like to because I didn't think she was a kindred spirit” (82). Anne is unafraid of owning her inexperience to Marilla – because she knows it is Marilla’s role to answer her questions – and further demonstrates how sameness between herself and those she considers her “kindred spirits” eases the anxiety of displacement in a new environment such as that outside of Green Gables itself. When Anne’s Sunday school teacher is replaced by the wife of the new minister, Mrs. Allan, there is a recognizable difference in Anne’s ability to learn outside of her domestic sphere. Unlike the previous teacher, Mrs. Allan encourages questions from her pupils: “She said we could ask her any questions we liked, and I asked ever so many. I’m good at asking question, Marilla” (170). Anne’s confidence outside of Green Gables hinges on her ability to behave convincingly within societal expectations, and Mrs. Allan’s position as a trustworthy model of those expectations ultimately allows Anne access to the external community of practice of Avonlea village.

Mythic Feminine

Anne's position as an outsider during her formative years led her to seek instruction on gender performance from an alternative source; her engagement with literature and the natural world thus introduces an additional category of womanhood I have termed the 'mythic' feminine. Kelly Blewett claims in her article "An Unfortunate Lily Maid: Transgressive Reading in *Anne of Green Gables*" that "[b]y stepping into the 'enchanted world' of reading, Anne is able to explore and consider her own life" (275). This textual exploration can be seen in many things, from the way Anne speaks to the way she behaves; most apparent however is the way that, upon her arrival in Avonlea, Anne undertakes the task of renaming many things around her, ascribing a mythologizing force to her new environment. Trees become brides, orphans, and queens, and the geranium in the kitchen window is swiftly rechristened 'Bonny.'

Anne's fascination with finding the right name for things demonstrates the mythic feminine in action. Marilla questions Anne over her meticulous renaming of Avonlea, and Anne responds: "Oh I like things to have handles even if they are only geraniums. It makes them seem more like people. How do you know but that it hurts a geranium's feelings to be called a geranium and nothing else? You wouldn't like to be called nothing but a woman all the time" (35). Anne thus, has some conception that gender – like nature – goes beyond the label ascribed to a person and takes on a more individualized experience. Butler acknowledges this same concept:

If one 'is' a woman, that is surely not all one is; the term fails to be exhaustive, not because a pregendered 'person' transcends the specific paraphernalia of its gender, but because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical

contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. (4)

Bonny the Geranium demonstrates the way Anne is grappling with the complexity of personal identity; through naming things she is reclaiming a sense of understanding about the world and herself. Paechter identifies the type of labelling Anne engages in as a method that children use to achieve cognitive awareness: “[A]s children start to differentiate between males and females, and to label themselves and others, they begin to develop cognitive understanding of the differences between the men and women, boys and girls they see around them” (43). It is for this reason that the intertextuality of *Anne of Green Gables* is so important; because of Anne’s position outside of society prior to her arrival in Avonlea, she has not previously had the opportunity to draw out the differences between men and women or engage in the process of labeling herself in relation to the things and people around her. Instead, Anne’s first weeks in Avonlea are full of her experimentation with labels and turns of phrase that she does not necessarily understand, which she pulls from a variety of books. Anne’s incorporation of what she has read helps her to gauge her own understanding based on the way Marilla reacts to the way she uses them; she does this in order to more effectively mimic the behaviors of her chosen model of womanhood. One such instance of this is seen when Anne defends herself against the accusation of stealing Marilla’s brooch; she claims “I never took the brooch out of your room and that is the truth, if I was to be led to the block for it – although I’m not very certain what a block is” (97). Here, Anne clearly knows that being led to the block is associated with guilt, but she is unclear on the further implications of that turn of phrase so she appeals to Marilla for some sort of explanation by owning her own ignorance.

Entrenched in Anne's interaction with the mythic feminine are her expectations for the gendered roles she will one day fill. Most notably, Anne is concerned with her eventual transition to womanhood hinging on becoming someone's wife. In her first conversation with Matthew as they drove to Green Gables Anne admits her fear that no one would ever want to marry her: "I've never seen [a bride] but I can imagine what she would look like. I don't ever expect to be a bride myself. I'm so homely nobody will ever want to marry me" (13). It is in this way that Anne's fear of being too far outside of social norms first manifests; just as she is afraid no one will want to marry her she is afraid of the broader implication that she will never perform gendered behavior convincingly due to her late induction into society. Throughout her childhood, this fear shifts and though Anne revels in romance of the imaginary realm she rejects the possibility of its creeping into the real. When Anne first begins attending school in Avonlea the other children have engaged in recognizing attraction through a "Take Notice" board, and Anne confides in Diana that she wants nothing to do with it.

"But I do think that writing take-notices up on the wall about the boys and girls is the silliest ever. I should just like to see anybody dare to write my name up with a boy's. Not of course," she hastened to add, "that anybody would."

Anne sighed. She didn't want her name written up. But it was a little humiliating to know that there was no danger of it. (109)

That Anne feels humiliation at the thought of not performing girlhood in a way that would be attractive further indicates her own recognition of the societal importance of engaging in romance as a prospective woman. In response to Anne's worry, Diana indicates several possible suitors for Anne: Charlie Sloane, who has already indicated an interest in Anne, and Gilbert Blythe, who is soon to return from a trip to Alberta with his father. However, Diana's remarks

fail to address the point behind her friend's anxiety; Anne is not sure she wants to accept that aspect of womanhood into her own performance of gender, a point Montgomery continues to address each time romance approaches Anne.

Over the course of the first fifteen chapters of *Anne of Green Gables*, Anne's behavior is largely informed by the imaginary as represented through the mythic feminine. Her position outside of societal expectations had left her without sufficient instruction to guide her performance of gender; however, the mythic feminine takes on an additional role through the way Anne identifies those that she terms her "kindred spirits." Just as with Anne's labelling, her identification of specific individuals as kindred spirits indicates the way she is beginning to conceptualize her own identity. Recognition of sameness between herself and others in her life allows Anne to further experiment with her own expression of identity – gender and otherwise. Within *Anne of Green Gables*, it is especially striking that Anne finds kinship with more unmarried women than she does with married women, and Marilla, Miss Stacy and Aunt Josephine remain prominent figures in Anne's life across several books in the series while the married Mrs. Allan quickly fades to obscurity.

Memetic Gender and Arrested Development

Anne displays a shift away from instruction by way of the mythic feminine and toward the societal instruction provided by the exterior community of practice of Avonlea when she invites Diana to Green Gables for a tea party. In a very literal sense, this is the first instance since Anne joined Green Gables' community of practice that she welcomes an outsider from the broad exteriority of Avonlea – on her own terms – into the interiority of her domestic sphere with the express purpose of performing gender. The act of girls playing at tea parties in an attempt to mimic behaviors portrayed to them demonstrates both the way womanhood is taught in interior

communities of practice – such as an individual household – and the way peer groups begin to form with the blurring of lines between interior and exterior.

Diana came over, dressed in her second best dress and looking exactly as it is proper to look when asked out to tea. At other times she was wont to run into the kitchen without knocking; but now she knocked primly at the front door. And when Anne, dressed in *her* second best, as primly opened it, both little girls shook hands as gravely as if they had never met before. (122)

By engaging in this particular mimicry, Anne and Diana practice what they have learned from observing their mothers and mythologize the rituals of femininity. In their play however, Anne and Diana break that expected mold of how they should behave as young women and Anne once again displays how she has strayed from the path and disrupted societal expectations because though she has observed Marilla acting as host she mistakenly serves the wrong drink; this mistake is attributed to the fact that she has never experienced either raspberry cordial or currant wine and cannot determine the difference without the instruction of a woman who has experienced both. Significantly, Marilla shoulders the blame for the mistake as she recognizes how Anne could not have known any better, but those outside of their domestic sphere – namely Mrs. Barry – blame Anne according to the expectations of her role as a young woman hosting a tea party.

Following the disastrous tea party and its resolution, Anne exhibits clear signs of having finally transitioned out of the initial stage of childhood with the formation of a peer group that extends beyond herself and Diana into the exterior society of Avonlea village. With the formation of this peer group each girl brings with her the information they have gleaned from their own interior communities of practice that they might share with the others. The girls share what they

have been told by their mothers, sisters, and aunts about the world and imagine what the future holds for them in light of these revelations. Additionally, all of the girls interact with the mythic feminine as represented in a poem of Tennyson's they had studied in school by engaging in the same textual exploration Anne displayed previously, and though it was Anne's idea her plan was "hailed with enthusiasm" from the other girls (221). Textual exploration here however, functions more similarly to the mimicry Anne and Diana engaged in than it does to the oblique references Anne made when she first arrived in Avonlea as each of the girls assume various roles from Lady Elaine to King Arthur all in an effort to capture the various interactions they imagine might take place between men and women over a funeral procession. Kelly Blewett observed of this particular instance of play: "By imaginatively engaging with the Tennyson chivalric poem, Anne explores the idea that the requirements of conventional, heteronormative romance apply to her" (278). Anne thus pulls her friends into the same worry over the gendered roles they must occupy and through this form of play demonstrates another source from which children draw their understanding of interpersonal communication and the roles men and women fulfill in a society. What transpires during this play further indicates Anne's own struggle with the concept of romance, however, as the real encroaches on the imaginary and for the first time since calling her "Carrots" Gilbert attempts to gain Anne's attention. Anne decidedly rejects him for his troubles: "I shall never be friends with you, Gilbert Blythe; and I don't want to be!" (226). Strikingly, Anne only accepts Gilbert's friendship when there is no hint of romance – real or imaginary – present in the exchange: when he gives up the Avonlea school for her to remain close to Marilla. She has not given up on the idea of romance altogether for in the safety of her imagination, Anne has no trouble acting out – and even enjoying – romance, but in the real world of Avonlea her continued refusal of such attention indicates how she remains at war with herself.

Ultimately, Anne will be classified as a woman according to her gender identity, but her performance of gender does not match exactly any of the examples of womanhood she engages with; thus her gender identity – and every other example of womanhood represented – is outside of the constraints established by binary gender. Butler’s response to the perspective laid out by Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* is especially of note as we consider the way these various examples of womanhood in Avonlea help Anne to construct her own gender identity. Butler asserts that “[i]f there is something right in Beauvoir’s claim that one is not born, but rather *becomes* a woman, it follows that *woman* itself is a term in process, a becoming, a constructing that cannot rightfully be said to originate or end” (45). Anne’s observation of and engagement with the various women of Avonlea who take up the role of mother and guide – from the unmarried Marilla to Mrs. Allan the reverend’s wife – thus merely demonstrates that act of becoming, and the Anne that is being produced through their collective influence cannot be said to conform to any one standard of womanhood. As Anne advances through the categories of womanhood her understanding and expression of gender identity becomes more complex, but her indecision over whether to accept or reject the potential role of wife from her performance of womanhood has led Anne to a position of arrested development. Until she can determine for herself what role she wants to fill, she is unable to fully transition beyond childhood.

2. Anne of Avonlea

By the opening of *Anne of Avonlea*, Montgomery's heroine is the same – in respect to her gender performance – as we left her at the end of *Anne of Green Gables*: firmly rooted in childhood. However, as the school teacher of Avonlea village, Anne must convincingly perform womanhood to the parents of her pupils; in this way, Anne's gender identity splits to accommodate independent performances of gender according to which community of practice she occupies. As Butler points out of identity formation:

It would be wrong to think that the discussion of “identity” ought to proceed prior to a discussion of gender identity for the simple reason that 'persons' only become intelligible through becoming gendered in conformity with recognizable standards of gender intelligibility. (22)

Anne's engagement with both interior and exterior communities of practice clearly demonstrates this idea in practice. The version of Anne that most clearly resembles the girl introduced in *Anne of Green Gables* is the Anne who performs gender in the safety of interiority; to those within her inner circle she is allowed to engage with the imaginary and linger in childhood. By putting off the complete acceptance or rejection of particular elements of womanhood, Anne prolongs her existence as a girl, and in some respects remains Anne “of Green Gables.” As the school teacher of Avonlea, however, Anne is categorized as a mothering figure to her pupils; she must engage with the real and perform womanhood according to the expectations of exterior Avonlea society. Due to the way Montgomery portrays her as a teacher, Anne is not blind to her influence and she considers the impact all that she manages to teach her students may have on their future lives: “The only thing I feel really sure of having accomplished today is that I taught Cliffie Wright that A is A. He never knew it before. Isn't it something to have started a soul along a path that may end in Shakespeare and Paradise Lost?” (37). Beyond the concept of opening the door to

reading for young minds however, Anne attempts to raise her students to behave like ladies and gentlemen according to what she herself has learned of those roles from her own teachers and from the books she has read.

While the mythic feminine does exist in *Anne of Avonlea* it operates as an expression of Anne's refusal to progress rather than as the exploration of possibility that it was initially. Anne's own identity has solidified to such a degree that she does not need to mythologize her life to the same degree as she did as a child. Anne's peers especially seem to discourage what little imagining Anne does engage with, as most of them have moved beyond the days of make-believe. Notably however, Montgomery introduces another woman engaged with the mythic feminine, and at her home Anne witnesses the effect of the imaginary becoming real.

Avonlea as Exterior Society

As with *Anne of Green Gables*, *Anne of Avonlea* is firmly rooted in place; however, where the first book is largely focused on the interior society of Green Gables itself, this sequel takes on an exterior focus that examines the communities of practice present in Avonlea village. Because of this shift to the exterior, Butler's theory of gender performance takes on a more broad role than we saw in the first of Montgomery's books; as more examples of various women crop up in the narrative, we must consider the implications of a universality to the label "woman." As Butler put it:

It would be wrong to assume in advance that there is a category of "women" that simply needs to be filled in with various components of race, class, age, ethnicity, and sexuality in order to become complete. The assumption of its essential incompleteness permits that category to serve as a permanently available site of contested meanings. The definitional

incompleteness of the category might then serve as a normative ideal relieved of coercive force. (20-1)

Montgomery's characters as they exist in her Anne series demonstrate more fully the complications of a universal label. No two women can be described through the same terms though each has claimed an identity that is reliant on her position as a woman of Avonlea society. There are still degrees to the exterior communities of practice however, and though Anne is no longer defined solely by the confines of Green Gables itself her identity and the identities of her neighbors are set up in opposition to those that exist outside of their collective community. From the outset, Montgomery demonstrates the way that communities close ranks in order to protect themselves from outsiders; she does this through the introduction of Mr. J. A. Harrison, a newcomer in Avonlea. "[Mr. Harrison] had publicly stated that he wanted no fools of women around his diggings. Feminine Avonlea took its revenge by the gruesome tales it related about his house-keeping and cooking" (2-3). When Mr. Harrison takes a stand against the community's occupants, Montgomery personifies the village of Avonlea through the women that inhabit it, and in so doing more tightly links those women to one another. This demonstrates the role of a community of practice as a collective which must defend against outsiders, and the risk Anne herself would take in rejecting their standard of womanhood outright. Paechter argued that "in the case of local communities of masculinity and femininity practice, it is shared repertoire that is most important" (23). This repertoire allows the community to band together and draw conclusions about outsiders that can ultimately protect the whole of the community from disruption.

Additionally, shared repertoire allows for a more clear basis of understanding between the members of a community of practice. In *Anne of Avonlea* this concept of shared repertoire is

most clearly demonstrated through the delineation of us versus them that arises when Avonlea village is faced with anyone they might consider an outsider. “Mrs. Lynde looked upon all people who had the misfortune to be born or brought up elsewhere than Prince Edward Island with a decided can-any-good-thing-come-out-of-Nazareth air” (9). This recontextualization of what can be seen as an insider-mentality reinforces the way we must read Anne’s arrival in Avonlea as it was described in *Anne of Green Gables*: for not only was she an outsider to society in a general sense, her introduction to Avonlea village positioned her as a dangerous and disrupting force that could upset the equilibrium of their society. In contrast, by the time we are reintroduced to Anne at the start of *Anne of Avonlea* she has been embraced by that community due to her position within their society for a substantial period of time; this has lent her shared repertoire with the other members of the exterior community of practice. If Anne were to reject their conception of womanhood then she runs the risk of being cast back out beyond the safety of her chosen community of practice.

Feminine Avonlea

The women presented in *Anne of Avonlea* occupy a variety of different roles, just as they did in *Anne of Green Gables*. However, as Anne moves more freely in the exterior community that is Avonlea village we as readers come to see a much larger cast of characters than was present in Montgomery’s first book, and Anne’s interactions with these women and their various performances of womanhood demonstrate her own uncertainty in the face of adulthood.

Though there are many examples of womanhood present in *Anne of Avonlea*, the most significant of those women – outside of Anne herself – is Marilla Cuthbert. Marilla’s role as Anne’s mother – according to social convention – increases her importance within the network of influence surrounding Anne. Anne relays all of her experiences with the women who occupy

exterior Avonlea back to Marilla in order to make sense of her own observations. The older woman engages Anne in these discussions and offers her advice as she worries after her own ability to transition from the role of child to adult. On the evening before Anne begins her work as a school teacher she worries over her ability to teach the children of Avonlea with any success, and Marilla admonishes her for her worrying:

“Marilla, what if I fail!”

“You’ll hardly fail completely in one day and there’s plenty more days coming,” said Marilla. “The trouble with you, Anne, is that you’ll expect to teach those children everything and reform all their faults right off, and if you can’t you’ll think you’ve failed.” (30)

Marilla’s advice in this – as in all things – helps Anne to steady herself and approach the change in her role within the community of practice with equanimity. Though she has grown into a mothering role herself, she has not outgrown her own mother; instead Anne continues to rely on the thoughtful input that helps her to become a more fully actualized young woman.

Like Marilla, Mrs. Rachel Lynde remains a key figure in Anne’s life. The busybody nature she exhibits positions her as the foremost among the gossips of “Feminine Avonlea” to which Mr. Harrison alluded; this can be seen in one of the earliest descriptions Montgomery provides of Mrs. Lynde: “Few things in Avonlea ever escaped Mrs. Lynde. It was only that morning Anne had said, ‘If you went to your own room at midnight, locked the door, pulled down the blind, and sneezed, Mrs. Lynde would ask you the next day how your cold was’” (7-8). Though Mrs. Lynde likes Anne, her position as a notable gossip makes her company less desirable to Anne; in many ways Mrs. Lynde’s gossip is a threat to Anne’s process of self-actualization as she explores her own gender identity. Before Anne takes her position as

Avonlea's school teacher, Montgomery offers her readers this glimpse into Anne's own views of Mrs. Lynde's influence in her life: "'Mrs. Lynde has come to give me good advice about tomorrow,' thought Anne with a grimace, 'but I don't believe I'll go in. Her advice is much like pepper, I think ... excellent in small quantities but rather scorching in her doses'" (29). Anne's discomfort with the observation of her behavior that gossip allows provides the first sign of the two Annes that emerge in this book. Where in *Anne of Green Gables*, Anne was largely within the safety of the interior sphere of Green Gables itself in *Anne of Avonlea*, Anne's position outside of that sphere leads her to create an entirely separate persona: Anne "of Avonlea" is thus Anne's performance of womanhood according to societal expectation.

The opening chapters of this sequel present a view of the exterior society Anne now occupies through several vignettes introducing the neighboring occupants of Avonlea. Among those neighbors are Mrs. Donnell and the Andrews sisters. When Anne first meets Mrs. Donnell she "recall[s] a recent criticism of Mr. Harrison's on an overdressed female he had seen in a Charlottetown store. 'She looked like a head-on collision between a fashion plate and a nightmare'" (35). The woman's sense of dress seems to herald her manner as she is as particular in her fashion as she is in the mere pronunciations of her own last name. "'I am Mrs. Donnell ... Mrs. H. B. Donnell,' announced this vision, 'and I have come in to see you about something Clarice Almira told me when she came home to dinner today. It annoyed me *excessively*'" (35). Mrs. Donnell is the first woman outside of Anne's inner circle to critique Anne's behavior in this book, and in so doing she sets a standard for the expectations Anne is being held to as an adult woman of Avonlea. The role of gossip in the formation of Anne's gender identity should not be overlooked, and it is especially of note then that Mrs. Donnell's vexation with Anne's behavior is the result of gossip. The gossip which Feminine Avonlea takes part in can easily be likened to

Foucault's panopticon in the way it operates as a method by which the women of Avonlea's community of practice self-police their behavior according to what has been deemed appropriate.

As for the Andrews sisters, when Anne and Diana go canvassing for the Avonlea Village Improvement Society, the girls observe that they are likely to have more luck in obtaining a donation if Eliza is not home. Through Eliza and Catherine Andrews, Montgomery illustrates how two individuals can perform womanhood appropriately in ways that are decidedly at odds with one another. Two such strong personalities present in one household demonstrate the way that very different performances of womanhood can exist even within the same interior community of practice. Even down to the typically feminine pursuit of hand craft, the sisters differ: "Eliza was sewing patchwork, not because it was needed but simply as a protest against the frivolous lace Catherine was crocheting" (43). These two women were raised – and continue to live – in the same household, their upbringing and the influences that taught them were the same, but their performances of womanhood vary in almost every respect. What is particularly interesting about their position in society with regards to Anne's own story however is their unmarried status. "The Andrews girls had been 'girls' for fifty odd years and seemed likely to remain girls to the end of their earthly pilgrimage. Catherine, it was said, had not entirely given up hope, but Eliza, who was born a pessimist, had never had any" (42). As in *Anne of Green Gables* Montgomery presents women who are both married and unmarried as models of womanhood for Anne to measure herself against, and their relationships to their singleness represent two acceptable paths Anne herself could take should she remain unmarried.

A Full-fledged Schoolma'am

Where Anne's position in *Anne of Green Gables* is most closely linked to that of a child – uninitiated into a clear gender role – in *Anne of Avonlea*, Anne exists with one foot in each world

simultaneously woman and girl; the Anne which exists in the exterior community of Avonlea has become a mothering force. As the schoolma'am of Avonlea school, Anne acts as the main role of guidance for the youth of Avonlea outside of their own parents; a position which she takes very seriously. One clear sign of the weight Anne feels now rests on her shoulders is found in the way she practices certain behaviors in order to appear more appropriate for the role she has been given: "She had been practicing [her dignified manner] considerably of late to have it in good working order when school began" (4). The act of practicing behavior suggests that the behavior will be performed for some purpose, and in this case, the performance is intended to help Anne more believably pass as an adult woman. Despite Anne's position within the community of Avonlea, she still struggles with the various troubles that come from growing up and being seen by those who have known her since she was a child as an adult capable of appropriately performing womanhood.

Montgomery manages to address the struggle of transition from child to adult quite well throughout *Anne of Avonlea*. In the opening chapters Anne grapples with what the people of Avonlea village have come to expect of her now that she has been fully accepted into their community of practice as more than just a stray woman-child still learning how to perform her gender appropriately. Paechter identifies that "[i]n order to remain within a particular community of practice, an individual has to regulate her or his performance so that it remains within the norms of that community" (15). The problem with this however is that Anne simultaneously exists in multiple sub-communities within the larger whole of Avonlea; because of this Anne's behavior as a school teacher differs from the behavior she exhibits amongst her peer group. While teaching she adheres as closely as she is able to the expectations of the broader community of practice established in Avonlea, but when she is among her peers and no longer

practicing dignified behaviors to appear more grown up she is the same flighty quick-tempered Anne of Green Gables. This is most effectively demonstrated when – after displaying her practiced manners – Anne decides to chase Mr. Harrison’s cow through a field of oats with Diana and promptly sell it to the first person who happens to pass by. Of course, at the time that she gave chase she had believed the cow to be her own, but even had it been her cow Anne displayed a complete lack of the dignified manner we know her to have been practicing; she is thus allowed to let go of the performance of adulthood when she is not actively teaching children how they are meant to behave.

Anne’s various performances of womanhood demonstrate her ability to code switch between who she is as a school teacher and who she is amongst her friends. This code switching – as with language – occurs when she transitions between different communities of practice. According to Butler, “acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality” (185-6). That is to say that the performance of certain behaviors helps one maintain a specific identity within the established social framework of a community of practice. For Anne, her performance of adulthood – specifically of womanhood – according to the expectations of Avonlea society demonstrates her chosen gender identity to those around her and aids in their ability to appropriately categorize her within their community’s social norms.

While talking to Gilbert Blythe and Jane Andrews about their respective positions as school teachers in the neighboring communities, Anne reveals that her largest anxiety about teaching stems from the fact that for many of her students she was quite recently their peer, and thus they know her as a different Anne than the one she must be as their teacher.

You're going to teach children who don't know you, but I have to teach my own old schoolmates, and Mrs. Lynde says she's afraid they won't respect me as they would a stranger unless I'm very cross from the first. But I don't believe a teacher should be cross. Oh, it seems to me such a responsibility! (26)

It is because of this anxiety of Anne's that we are able to see the way she exists – in the minds of those around her – as several different versions of herself all reliant on how she has chosen to perform her identity. In this conversation Anne also reveals how she is still taking cues on her particular performance of womanhood from the women who taught her in *Anne of Green Gables*. When performing womanhood to exterior Avonlea, Anne ultimately sets aside her dominant identity – that of girlhood and does work to develop it; instead, she becomes a more practical version of herself in order to effectively mother the children of Avonlea. However, this version of Anne – though more rational in nature – is more entrenched in the imaginary than her private persona.

The first children whom Anne is able to engage with as a community mother are her students at Avonlea school. Just as Miss Stacy before her demonstrated, Anne's position as the school teacher in Avonlea gives her unique access to the children and their development into adulthood. Montgomery herself identifies these children as an “array of little pilgrims to the Grown-up Land” (31). Anne is no longer the stray woman-child, but rather a model of womanhood for her subjects to observe and mimic in their own right. In examining Anne's students as the new group of children in Avonlea village's community of practice it is important to consider the way each child is representative of their own upbringing and thus the domestic sphere they once inhabited. One student, Mary Bell, demonstrates this idea quite clearly:

Anne wondered what sort of mother the child had, to send her to school dressed as she was. She wore a faded pink silk dress, trimmed with a great deal of cotton lace, soiled white kid slippers, and silk stockings. Her sandy hair was tortured into innumerable kinky and unnatural curls, surmounted by a flamboyant bow of pink ribbon bigger than her head. Judging from her expression she was very well satisfied with herself. (32)

Anne wonders about Mary Bell's mother simply from knowing Mary Bell herself; she recognizes that each child reflects something of their upbringing and thus the socialization that has led to the construction of their gender identity.

Real vs. Imaginary

The mythic feminine, as presented in *Anne of Green Gables*, seems to take on a less prominent role in Anne's life as Anne "of Avonlea." However, there are several key moments where Anne breaks through to mythologize her experience just as she did in *Anne of Green Gables*; one such instance occurs when Anne and Diana go out to canvas for the Avonlea Village Improvement Society:

"The air has magic in it. Look at the purple in the cup of that harvest valley, Diana. And oh, do smell the dying fir! It's coming up from that little sunny hollow [...] That's two thirds Wordsworth and one third Anne Shirley. [...] That delicious aroma must be the souls of the firs ... and of course it will be just souls in heaven."

"Trees haven't souls," said practical Diana, (39-40)

Anne – as is usual for her – is quick to weave a fanciful tale about their surroundings, but rather than allude obliquely to the source of her inspiration she names Wordsworth as having helped her to create the resulting image. This change in the manner by which Anne mythologizes the nature of Avonlea indicates a distinct separation – in her own understanding – between what is

myth and what is real; she is representing both versions of herself by doing this. Despite trying to acknowledge the real in her mythologizing, and despite her peers – as represented through Diana – having moved beyond the stage of identity formation Anne is unable to fully give up her imaginings. When the girls subsequently decide to gather the needles to make fir cushions Anne says that such a fine smelling pillow would change the nature of her dreams: “I’d be certain to dream I was a dryad or a wood-nymph then. But just this minute I’m well content to be Anne Shirley, Avonlea schoolma’am” (40). At first glance, this more grown up outlook seems to indicate a more self-satisfied Anne than the one presented in *Anne of Green Gables*; she suggests to her friend that instead of imagining a different life for herself, as she used to do in childhood, her dreams are reserved for sleep, but Montgomery has just demonstrated how that is untrue. Anne still reaches for the imaginary before the real; the only difference is that now she is aware that she should not.

Beyond the intertextuality present in *Anne of Avonlea*, Montgomery – through Anne – mythologizes the mundane. Anne’s obsession with right names carries over from the first book as she reflects on what precisely about a name indicates something deeper about a person’s identity, but it is Diana who is able to pin down that identity indicates more about a name than vice versa:

“I think people make their names nice or ugly just by what they are themselves. I can’t bear Josie or Gertie for names now but before I knew the Pye girls I thought them real pretty.”

“That’s a lovely idea, Diana,” said Anne enthusiastically. “Living so that you beautify your name even if it wasn’t beautiful to begin with ... making it stand in people’s thoughts for something so lovely and pleasant that they never think of it by itself.” (192)

This idea when contrasted against that presented in *Anne of Green Gables* reveals a very different understanding of the way the girls have developed to understand the world around them. Where Anne once saw the naming of things as the establishment of a deeper identity she – and those who occupy her peer group – now understand that it is more about what identity reflects onto a name. Perhaps, with this new understanding, it would not be so terrible for a geranium to be called only that.

In all of Anne's mythologizing however, the only site where it truly takes hold and transitions from imaginary to something real is at Miss Lavendar's home, Echo Lodge; the place itself serves a singular function within the continuing narrative of Montgomery's Anne series as a rather unique community of practice; like Green Gables, Echo Lodge represents a domestic – or interior – community of practice, unlike Green Gables however this particular community exists outside of the broader community of Avonlea village. Additionally, Lavendar's position as the head of such a community of practice – though it is only a community of two – puts her in an interesting position. Within Echo Lodge, Lavendar maintains a very peculiar community of practice that requires constant use of imagination.

[W]hat is the use of being an independent old maid if you can't be silly when you want to, and when it doesn't hurt anybody? A person must have some compensations. I don't believe I could live at times if I didn't pretend things. I'm not often caught at it though, and Charlotta the Fourth never tells. (188)

Charlotta the Fourth – whose name is actually Leonora – is Miss Lavendar's imagination personified. From her position as the protector of all Miss Lavendar's eccentricities to the way she responds to a name that is not even her own, the child present within Echo Lodge's community of practice is being brought up with a different understanding of what is appropriate

according to the social norms she is exposed to. Interestingly, Echo Lodge also mirrors the imaginings Anne exhibited in her own childhood when she befriended the disembodiment of her own voice – which she called Violetta:

Just up the river a little way from the house there was a long green little valley, and the loveliest echo lived there [...] I imagined that it was a little girl called Violetta and we were great friends [...]. The night before I went to the asylum I said good-bye to Violetta, and oh, her good-bye came back to me in such sad tones.” (AoGG 58-9).

As if childhood has been frozen in time, Miss Lavendar sits in her home and continues to call out to the childhood Anne had to leave behind before she even arrived at Green Gables. In much the same way her home becomes representative of regression in the formation of Anne’s own identity.

In *Anne of Green Gables* Montgomery provided many different – acceptable – models of unmarried women, but it is with Lavendar Lewis that she provides for her readers a glimpse into the type of woman Anne herself may one day grow up to be if she remains on her current trajectory. This is the first time Anne truly sees herself in another woman; all the other women of Avonlea village have fully transitioned out of their own childhoods and accepted the reality of their own circumstances, but Miss Lavendar persists in the imaginary.

Diana secretly thought Miss Lavendar quite as peculiar as report had pictured her. The idea of a woman of forty-five playing at having a tea party, just as if she were a little girl! But Anne of the shining eyes exclaimed joyfully,

“Oh, do *you* imagine things too?”

That “too” revealed a kindred spirit to Miss Lavendar. (187)

This exchange is compelling, because rather than have Anne identify Miss Lavendar as a kindred spirit Montgomery has flipped the usual script and it is now Anne who is claimed as a kindred spirit. Though Anne is not the initiating force in their relationship it is clear that this feeling of kinship is mutual. While she's enamored by Miss Lavendar however, Anne also comes to see how lonely the older woman is; after keeping Anne and Diana at Echo Lodge far longer than either had intended Miss Lavendar secures a promise from them that they'll visit her often and walks with them to the gate:

She looked suddenly old and tired; the glow and radiance had faded from her face; her parting smile was as sweet with ineradicable youth as ever, but when the girls looked back from the first curve in the lane they saw her sitting on an old stone bench under the silver poplar in the middle of the garden with her head leaning wearily on her hand.

“She does look lonely,” said Diana softly. “We must come often to see her.” (191-2)

That realization of just how lonely Miss Lavendar's existence is fundamentally changes the way Anne decides to present womanhood, and it is through what she sees of the tragic romance between Miss Lavendar and Mr. Irving that Anne comes to recognize that the type romance she has mythologized and aspired to for so long is not nearly so satisfying as her imagination would want her to believe. When that romance is played out in real life through Miss Lavendar and Stephen Irving it is hard to escape the realization that she doesn't actually want a tragedy for her own future.

3. Anne of the Island

Anne's resistance to progressing away from the imaginary of girlhood to the real of womanhood in both *Anne of Green Gables* and *Anne of Avonlea* comes to a head in *Anne of the Island*. As the members of Anne's peer group once and for all leave their childhood behind she must decide for herself whether to accept or reject the elements of gender performance that have previously been modeled to her. When contrasted with Anne's own experiences, most striking are the various dealings with marriage each of Anne's peers have. From the beginning, Anne has been preoccupied by the problem she anticipates in marriage – either in its presence or its lack; As a result, Montgomery's readers are primed for the internal struggle Anne faces by the time she is confronted with the reality of becoming someone's wife.

In many ways this book demonstrates a convergence of the two Annes that were present in *Anne of Avonlea*; Anne is no longer one or the other, but instead a combination of the two that produces a new Anne: Anne "of the Island." In the environs of Redmond College, Anne is able to cast off the preconceived notions of her character that haunt her in the familiar landscape of her own hometown, and in so doing can choose to perform gender without fear of Feminine Avonlea's interference by way of gossip. However, this newfound freedom does not cure Anne of her fear of the unknown; rather, she is more explicitly aware of her own perspective amid the expectations that have been placed upon her. On the evening before Diana's wedding, Anne goes through a process of mourning that exemplifies the loss she feels over leaving girlhood behind. "'Oh,' she thought, 'how horrible it is that people have to grow up – and marry – and *change!*'" (179). Anne's attempt to stall the process of transition from girl to woman thus demonstrates her anxiety over the unknown. On her journey to self-actualization Anne must undergo these processes of mourning in order to truly appreciate what she has previously experienced and grow

as a person; this process requires her to weigh the various elements of her current gender expression against the future she envisions for herself, and in so doing she is able to stabilize her performance of gender Identity and more explicitly choose the elements of womanhood she wants to incorporate into her performance.

Mythic Escapism

L.M. Montgomery opens *Anne of the Island* with a highly sentimental tone; as Anne prepares to leave her childhood behind she experiences a noticeable shift in her interactions with the Mythic Feminine. In *Anne of Avonlea*, Anne had moved beyond her more childlike interactions with the Mythic Feminine in order to mythologize the mundane; however, anxiety over the changes now taking place in her life has led Anne back to the habits – and haunts – of her youth. From the outset Montgomery reminds her readers of all the locations upon which Anne has imagined something more; from The Haunted Wood to The Lake of Shining Waters – even with a trip down to “the spot where [she] had climbed from her sinking Dory on the day Elaine floated down to Camelot” – Anne is taking a tour of her own childhood memories (5). In the course of this tour Anne tells Diana of her recent work with Marilla to clear out their spare room for Mrs. Lynde – an act which she likens to a desecration:

[B]ut it did seem as if we were committing sacrilege. That old spare room has always seemed like a shrine to me. [...] “So passes the glory of this world,” concluded Anne, with a laugh in which there was a little note of regret. It is never pleasant to have our old shrines desecrated, even when we have outgrown them. (2)

The desecration of this shrine in Anne’s childhood home becomes emblematic of the desecration she feels is taking place across the whole of her memory. In leaving Prince Edward Island to attend college, Anne is – against her will – being forced out of her community of practice and into a world where she must perform womanhood to strangers. By actively clinging to the

Mythic Feminine as it was represented in her most childish state Anne demonstrates the fear she feels over becoming a woman outside of the safety of Avonlea. “‘I’m afraid to speak or move for fear all this wonderful beauty will vanish just like a broken silence,’ breathed Anne” (5). Anne worries that any change to what she already knows will disrupt the picture-perfect qualities of her childhood and ruin it retroactively.

In the first days after Anne’s departure from Avonlea she refuses to engage with the Mythic Feminine at all. Those who know her best – Gilbert and Priscilla – notice this change in her typical behavior. As they travel from the island to the mainland, Gilbert confronts Anne about her lack of – what he terms – “philosophy”:

“Where’s all your philosophy gone, Anne?”

“It’s all submerged under a great, swamping wave of loneliness and homesickness. I’ve longed for three years to go to Redmond – and now I’m going – and I wish I weren’t! Never mind! I shall be cheerful and philosophical again after I have just one good cry. I *must* have that, ‘as a went’ – and I’ll have to wait until I get into my boardinghouse bed tonight, wherever it may be, before I can have it. Then Anne will be herself again.” (19)

When contrasted with the almost desperate way she had been mythologizing Avonlea prior to their departure, Anne’s loss of childlike wonder for the adventure of leaving home and the new environment she gets to be a part of demonstrates the fear of letting go of her childhood. In Anne’s mind, to engage with this new environment the same way she had Avonlea would be a betrayal. When they arrive in Kingsport however, Priscilla’s attempt to engage Anne in the Mythic Feminine differs from Gilbert’s straightforward line of questioning; rather than acknowledge openly Anne’s shift in behavior she attempts to fill the gap by describing to Anne a

mythologized version of Kingsport. Beginning with their “delicious” landladies – who after reaching the age of thirty “never were twins again” – and ending with the old graveyard across the street from their boarding house Priscilla attempts to incite in Anne her old habits of mythologizing everyone and everything around her (21). Despite Priscilla’s efforts however, Anne remains unmoved and further removes into the confines of her own mind – unwilling to revel in the newness of her environment. This is unsurprising based on what Anne had told Gilbert – that she needed a good cry to be herself again – however, rather than follow through on that plan Anne refuses to bring back her old self; this decision signals a distinct break from her childhood self: “I won’t think about [Green Gables] – that way homesickness lies. I’m not even going to have my good cry. I’ll put that off to a more convenient season, and just now I’ll go calmly and sensibly to bed and to sleep” (22). Based on all of Montgomery’s prior descriptions of Anne, neither calm nor sensible seem the appropriate descriptors to attribute to her. Instead the Annes of Green Gables and Avonlea were described as outspoken, impulsive, and stubborn. The contrast of these new terms against what we already know of Anne’s character invites us to consider what is signified through this breaking of character Anne experiences.

Outsider Again

Through her transition from Avonlea to Kingsport, Anne face more than just a physical disruption but a social one as well. Being within or without a community of practice impacts the ability of an individual to perform gender, and thus construct identity. According to Carrie Paechter, “Identity can thus be seen as related to a competent and convincing performance of a particular role. It is defined not just internally by the individual but externally by the group’s inclusive or exclusive attitude towards that individual” (23). In Avonlea Anne was part of the exclusive group and knew the inner workings that made up its rules; Montgomery demonstrates

Anne's position within that community of practice through her the insider knowledge at her disposal:

To an outsider, the statement that Sloanes were Sloanes might not be very illuminating, but she understood. Every village has such a family; good, honest, respectable people they may be, but Sloanes they are and must ever remain, though they speak with the tongues of men and angels (14).

Anne's ability to recognize "Sloanishness" identifies her as an Avonlea native – despite her not having been born there; this illustrates the importance of performance in the construction of identity as in order to identify as belonging to some group or another an individual must be able to recognize and respond in kind. In leaving Avonlea behind to attend college however, Anne has abandoned her known communities of practice and become an outsider again. Just as she did upon her first arrival at Green Gables, this version of Anne occupies a space that is simultaneously both and neither; she can be both woman and girl until her performance of gender proves otherwise; unlike her position in *Anne of Green Gables* however, Anne's performance of womanhood feels inevitable.

Building Communities of Practice

As Anne settles into life in Kingsport, she constructs communities of practice of her own; this is seen both through the exterior community of the Freshmen class, and – eventually – through the interior community of Patty's Place. Made up of many displaced persons, the Freshman class formed their own community of practice on the basis of their displacement.

[S]uddenly, everything seemed to fall into focus – Redmond, professors, classes, students, studies, social doings. Life became homogeneous again, instead of being made up of detached fragments. The Freshmen, instead of being a collection of unrelated

individuals, found themselves a class, with a class spirit, a class yell, class interests, class antipathies and class ambitions. (35)

Anne finds support among her compatriots at Redmond College and is able to tease out the finer points of her identity as young woman because of that network of support. Phillipa demonstrates this feeling of sameness in her first interaction with Anne and Priscilla by owning her homesickness to them openly, and her candor paves the way for their friendship to expand into a feeling of community. When the girls choose to rent a house for themselves later in their time at Redmond, that community solidifies into something more defined through its localization in the interior of Patty's Place. The girls' community is constructed with its own rules of practice, and these rules – in regards to their interactions beyond the community – are openly addressed:

“There's just one more thing,” said Priscilla resolutely. “You, Phil, as all Redmond knows, entertain callers almost every evening. Now, at Patty's Place we can't do that. We have decided that we shall be at home to our friends on Friday evenings only. If you come with us you'll have to abide by that rule.” (76)

The girl's rule concerning male callers not only demonstrates the formality of the community they have formed, but also positions them in the broad exterior society of Kingsport as a community of young women.

From Girls to Women

Just as we have seen in Montgomery's previous two books, *Anne of the Island* features a varied cast of female characters across all ages and walks of life, however unlike the previous two books Anne's formation of identity is strictly relegated to the interactions with those in her peer group rather than those outside of it. This is seen most clearly in her friendships with Diana Barry, Ruby Gillis, and Phillipa Gordon. The refusal to change and grow that Anne exhibits early in this novel most closely resembles the behavior of her friend Ruby Gillis, however, who –

unlike Diana and Phillipa – does not get to see her wedding day. Though it is through a manner quite different from all the other girls in the narrative, Ruby is the first of the girls of Avonlea faced with the unavailability of growing up. It is while visiting Avonlea between terms that Anne is made aware of Ruby's illness:

“Ruby Gillis is dying of galloping consumption,” said Mrs. Lynde bluntly. “Everybody knows it except herself and her family. They won't give in. If you ask them, she's perfectly well. She hasn't been able to teach since she had that attack of congestion in the winter, but she says she's going to teach again in the fall, and she's after the White Sands school. She'll be in her grave, poor girl, when White Sands school opens, that's what.”
(78-9)

Ruby's avoidant behavior mirrors the behavior Anne exhibited prior to leaving for college; Montgomery has thus written two girls resistant to their own transitions to womanhood. With Anne's refusal of adulthood and all its trappings it is difficult for the reader to see what ill could come of it, but Ruby's refusal to acknowledge the sudden decline in her own health is far more detrimental to her than accepting her circumstances would be. That is not to say Ruby's transition would be easy, but rather by refusing to acknowledge what is happening she and her family are making it harder for her to face. Children's literature regularly dodges the conversation of illness and death, which often leads to denial similar to Ruby's. Susan Honeyman wrote of this trend in her article “Lies We Tell Sick Children: Mutual Pretense and Uninformed Consent in Cancer Narratives” that “such denial further burdens [children] with keeping up a masquerade while denying their need for ‘open awareness,’ which would allow freely discussing concerns, questions, and fears” (179). This performance of denial exhibited by Ruby firmly entrenches her in the role of the sick child, according to tradition in children's

literature, and her girlhood is preserved despite her empty plans for the future. It is only through acknowledging what is happening to her – acknowledging that there is no future to plan for – that Ruby is able to become a woman in the eyes of the reader. When Ruby does address her illness, she admits to being frightened of the change that she is facing; dying – and going to Heaven – “*won't be what [she's] been used to*” (105). It seems a silly thing to Anne at first, but the more she thinks of this reason the more it resonates with her and she ultimately concludes that “it was no wonder her soul clung, in blind helplessness, to the only things she knew and loved” (106). Anne herself has been clinging to childhood in a manner similar to the way Ruby was clinging to life. The fear of leaving behind her childhood had led Anne to push aside anything to do with becoming a woman, however, Ruby's illness – and eventual death – recontextualize what Anne has been feeling about the process of growing up and leaving everything behind. Montgomery illuminates this recontextualization through Anne's reflections on their conversation:

The evening had changed something for her. Life held a different meaning, a deeper purpose. On the surface it would go on just the same; but the deeps had been stirred. It must not be with her as with poor butterfly Ruby. When she came to the end of one life it must not be to face the next with shrinking terror of something wholly different - something for which accustomed thought and ideal and aspiration unfitted her. (108)

In recognizing the sameness between herself and Ruby, Anne's fear of growing up takes on an altogether different form. Where she once would've avoided the inevitability of her own transition to womanhood entirely – and steered conversations away from the topic – Anne now begins to identify the specifics of what frightens her, and through that identification is able to combat her fears.

Though Anne goes off to college in Kingsport, Diana's continued existence in Avonlea demonstrates the way gender identity solidifies as children transition to adulthood. In the opening chapter of *Anne of the Island*, Anne and Diana discuss the changes that have come over Avonlea as its inhabitants come and go; this is seen specifically in Mr. and Mrs. Allan, and in Miss Lavendar – now Mrs. Irving – who has recently left on her honeymoon. Where Diana, who has recently become engaged herself saw Miss Lavendar's wedding as a “crown” to their summer, Anne feels bitterly that these changes represent only a loss in her life: “Miss Lavendar and Mr. and Mrs. Allan gone – how lonely the manse looks with the shutters all closed! I went past it last night, and it made me feel as if everybody in it had died” (2). Anne sees every change as a death, and every transition as a loss. That Diana is also engaged – also due to leave her behind – acts as a catalyst to Anne's regression. Anne has long been dreading the day Diana becomes a woman, and as early as *Anne of Green Gables* we can see the beginnings of this dread:

“It's about Diana,” sobbed Anne luxuriously. “I love Diana so, Marilla. I cannot ever live without her. But I know well when we grow up that Diana will get married and go away and leave me. And oh, what shall I do? I hate her husband – I just hate him furiously. I've been imagining it all out – the wedding and everything – Diana dressed in snowy garments, with a veil, and looking as beautiful and regal as a queen; and me the bridesmaid, with a lovely dress, too, and puffed sleeves, but with a breaking heart hid beneath my smiling face.” (AoGG 119)

In this daydream from Anne's youth her closest and dearest friend abandons her for the trappings of womanhood – for in the mind of these young girls nothing is more quintessentially feminine than to be a bride; this eventuality is a terrifying thing to Anne. In *Anne of the Island*

Montgomery brings this terror back to the forefront of Anne's mind as she is forced to face the impending changes of leaving her own childhood behind. When Diana's wedding does come to pass Anne's imaginings from so many years before take on a slightly altered shape:

“It's all pretty much as I used to imagine it long ago, when I wept over your inevitable marriage and our consequent parting,” she laughed. “You are the bride of my dreams, Diana, with the ‘lovely misty veil’; and I am your bridesmaid. But, alas! I haven't the puffed sleeves – though these short lace ones are even prettier. Neither is my heart wholly breaking nor do I exactly hate Fred.” (179-80)

To her own surprise, Anne is not brokenhearted over this particular development; the changes that were once so frightening to her came on so gradually that she had time to become accustomed to them. Before, marriage signified to Anne the end of all things associated with her childhood; this ending extended to her friendships. Were she or her friends to become engaged and subsequently married, they would be separated in a manner that went beyond mere distance, but just as she did with Ruby, Anne is able to take what she observes in the actuality of Diana's marriage to Fred and apply it to her understanding of what it is to leave childhood behind. In seeing the ease with which Diana enters womanhood Anne opens herself up to the possibility of romance where before she had been reticent to do so.

In contrast to Diana's transition to womanhood at home, Montgomery demonstrates through Anne's friend Phillipa how leaving one's home allows for reinvention and self-exploration; this is best seen through Phil's various courtships and eventual marriage to Jonas Blake. Phil – like Anne – is avoiding the eventuality of womanhood when she arrives in Kingsport. When Anne first meets her, Phil explains the troubles she faces in trying to live up to the expectations of her mother – who wants eighteen-year-old Phil to find a husband:

“I concluded I would rather come to Redmond than be married. Besides, how could I have made up my mind which man to marry?”

“Were there so many?” laughed Anne.

“Heaps. The boys like me awfully – they really do. But there were only two that mattered. The rest were all too young and too poor. I must marry a rich man, you know.”

(31).

In coming to Kingsport to attend Redmond college, Phil has delayed the inevitability of her having to make a decision concerning her future as a young woman. Phil’s flirtations while at Redmond are one manner through which she performs gendered behavior as she openly acknowledges her unwillingness to fully transition into adulthood as a young woman and choose an appropriate husband. This unwillingness is precisely why her eventual choice of husband is so compelling.

“Anne Shirley, don’t you dare to say or hint or think that I’ve fallen in love with Mr. Blake. Could *I* care for a lank, poor, ugly theologian – named Jonas? As Uncle Mark says, ‘It’s impossible, and what’s more it’s improbable.’ [...]”

“P.S. It is impossible – but I am horribly afraid it’s true. I’m happy and wretched and scared. *He can never* care for me, I know. (159)

Phil has always been clear about her expectations for a proper suitor; he must be handsome and well off, but Jonas is neither of those things. In that manner, Phil has gone against the expectations of her mother – and thus her community of practice. By behaving according to her own expectations however, Phil is able to find real happiness in her choice of match: “Mother thinks it is terrible – she thinks Jo might at least take a church in a decent place. But the wilderness of the Patterson slums will blossom like the rose for me if Jo is there. Oh, Anne, I’m

so happy my heart aches with it” (231). We, as readers, are struck by the contrast between this Phil and the girl who once claimed she could never be happy with a husband who didn’t have “heaps of money” (31). What is most compelling, however, is the shift in Phil’s motives as she attains womanhood; where at eighteen Phil was resigned to a fate in which she must fulfill her mother’s expectations and perform her duty appropriately, just the difference of several years and a little distance has allowed her the freedom to explore her own expectations. Anne’s position as an observer of Phil’s transition to womanhood allows her – alongside Montgomery’s readers – to consider the changes that had to occur for Phil to reach this new life stage, and that observation encourages Anne to cast off the expectations of those around her in order to seek out what she truly wants out of womanhood.

From “Anne Girl” to “Queen Anne”

Anne’s own transition from girlhood to womanhood is fraught with indecision. Over the course of Montgomery’s books at least five separate men approach Anne with an offer of marriage, but it isn’t until she has determined for herself what she wants her future to look like that she chooses any one path. Before she leaves for college however, she is forced to face the speculation of the public sphere:

“Milty Boulter says his mother says you're going to college to see if you can catch a man. Are you, Anne? I want to know.”

For a second Anne burned with resentment. Then she laughed, reminding herself that Mrs. Boulter’s crude vulgarity of thought and speech could not harm her.

“No, Davy, I'm not. I'm going to study and grow and learn about many things.” (8)

The expectations of Avonlea society weigh heavily on Anne, and her future is much talked of amongst her neighbors; like Phil, she is a person of some notoriety in her hometown, and is

caught up in the expectations of the members of her communities of practice. Paechter identifies of gender identity: “[C]onstruction takes place through differential treatment of boy and girl children, and through parental expectations of and aspirations for boys and girls” (43). That the whole of Avonlea seems to have some sort of expectation of Anne’s future pushes her to reject those expectations until she can work out for herself what she wants. Anne has to be willing to grow up; unwillingness leads to dissatisfaction. Anne’s worry that the act of growing up will retroactively tarnish the childhood she leaves behind leads her to reject changes to the preexisting social dynamics in Avonlea brought on by those intent on moving forward into adulthood; this is seen most notably in her relationship with Gilbert Blythe. In her attempt to hold on to her childhood however, Anne nearly loses something else – the ability to progress alongside her peers. In an attempt to dissuade – what the narrator calls – Gilbert’s sentimentality, Anne distances herself from him and faces the consequences: “[Anne] found, however, that revenge hurts nobody quite so much as the one who tries to inflict it. Gilbert walked airily off with Ruby Gillis, and Anne could hear them laughing and talking gaily as they loitered along in the still, crisp autumn air” (11). Gilbert’s walking off with Ruby at this early stage of the narrative foreshadows his own illness and near death after Anne’s outright refusal of his first proposal. In this way Anne’s choice to linger in the past leads to her peers moving on without her, and every time she repeats this mistake we can see the same thing occurring. Later in the narrative, Montgomery links Gilbert’s illness more explicitly to Anne’s willingness to grow up when he admits to a change in his health following a letter from Phil: “[S]he told me there was really nothing between you and Roy, and advised me to ‘try again.’ Well, the doctor was amazed at my rapid recovery after that” (242-3). In linking Anne’s early avoidant behavior to the potential for loss in this way, Montgomery demonstrates the necessity of leaving childhood

behind. Anne did not need to become somebody's wife, but she did need to decide once and for all what she wanted from womanhood; if she had continued to linger in childhood she ran the risk of losing all of her peer group as they left her behind for the trappings of adulthood.

Marilla, like Anne, is in no rush for Anne to release the trappings of childhood and transition to adulthood by way of a marriage. Before Anne leaves for college she attempted to dissuade Mrs. Lynde from speculating about Anne and Gilbert's relationship:

"They're only children yet," [Marilla] said shortly.

Mrs. Lynde laughed good-naturedly. "Anne is eighteen; I was married when I was that age. We old folks, Marilla, are too much given to thinking children never grow up, that's what." (13)

It is not altogether unusual that Marilla would be as reluctant as Anne for the latter to grow up as Marilla circumvented the same expectations when she herself was transitioning from girl to woman. Her discomfort with Anne's potential suitors being much talked of and her encouragement of Anne avoiding that inevitability for as long as she wants does however demonstrate the influence owed the models of gender identity in a child's life, for despite all of Avonlea taking part in Anne's upbringing to some degree, Marilla is owed far more as the head of the domestic sphere of which Anne was a part. Once she is separated from the preconceived notions held by members of Avonlea village about who she is meant to be however, Anne is able to live her life according to her own expectations for the first time. During that period she receives proposals from not only Gilbert and Roy, but also from Charlie Sloane, Sam Toliver, and Billy Andrews – by way of his sister, Jane. With each subsequent proposal however, Anne becomes more and more disillusioned with the idea of a proposal being a thing to look forward to, and instead seems to be set on disregarding societal expectations entirely. Still, on each visit

home she is confronted by those expectations as some one or another of her neighbors addresses the idea to her: “‘It’ll be time for you to be getting a husband when you’re through Redmond,’ said Mr. Harrison. ‘I don’t believe in putting marrying off too long – like I did’” (92). Anne’s continual “putting off” of marriage becomes her own method of thwarting preconceived notions of gender identity, and it is only when she is confronted with the embodiment of her dreamed up ideal in Roy Gardner that her resolve begins to waver.

The mythologized nature of a romantic ideal can here be identified as another method by which Anne was attempting to avoid her transition into womanhood. By creating a romantic ideal that – outside of daydreams – was otherwise unattainable Anne ensured that she would maintain control of her own future; Butler would call this the “heterosexualisation of desire” (24). If questioned Anne could point to that ideal and insist that he simply hadn’t come along yet. Except, he did come along, in the form of Roy Gardner – a young man who so perfectly encapsulated her imagined ideal that even Anne had to admit that she couldn’t explain why she couldn’t accept his proposal:

[H]is proposal was as beautifully worded as if he had copied it, as one of Ruby Gillis’ lovers had done, out of a Department of Courtship and Marriage. The whole effect was quite flawless. And it was also sincere. There was no doubt that Roy meant what he said. [...] Anne felt that she ought to be thrilling from head to foot. But she wasn’t; she was horribly cool. (223-4)

Anne’s coolness in the face of such a proposal reveals her own belief in the unattainability of her imagined ideal; she had never intended a relationship to get this far and she had certainly never expected that she would have to account for her own unwillingness to become engaged to someone who was – by all accounts – perfect for her. The compulsory heterosexuality Anne

engaged with to create that romantic ideal was a performance in and of itself. Instead of becoming engaged to Roy Gardner, however, Anne finished out her time at Redmond College and returned to Avonlea. Anne's return to Avonlea marks an interesting shift in her own conception of self. Despite having constructed a well-rounded identity while in Kingsport, Anne is dissatisfied with the end results of her time there having believed herself that she ought to have loved Roy. A return to Avonlea does not herald the return of Anne's childishness however, instead she seems determined to become a woman yet – though some of her remarks make it clear she expects to pass right over the role of “married woman” to the realm of “old maid.” Gilbert's second proposal forgoes those expectations:

Gilbert, glancing at her sideways as they walked along a shadowy wood-path, thought she had never looked so lovely. Anne, glancing sideways at Gilbert, now and then, thought how much older he looked since his illness. It was as if he had put boyhood behind him forever. (240)

This anticipatory interlude allows Anne the opportunity to reflect on not only what is coming, but what has come before. Where every prior proposal seems to catch her off guard in an attempt to pin her down, Gilbert solicits this conversation well in advance and gives her the space to turn him away should she wish it. For the first time, Anne is encountering a proposal on her own terms. Like Gilbert, Anne has left childhood behind her, but this does not mean her performance of gender has become static; rather, she has entered into the next stage of her life in which she can develop and perform her gender.

CONCLUSION

Since its publication in 1990, *Gender Trouble* has changed the way theorists talk about gender identity; where once gender was thought to be something concrete – something inherently understood – now there were layers to not only its development, but its expression as well. Butler countered Simone de Beauvoir’s argument that one has to undergo process to become a woman, by claiming instead that the category itself is unsatisfactory, that it “fails to be exhaustive” (4); because of this, Butler concluded that gender itself was a construction reliant on an individual’s performance according to societal expectation:

[T]he various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all. Gender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis; the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of those productions – and the punishments that attend not agreeing to believe in them [...]. (190)

Every individual performs gender according to the circumstances of their own upbringing, and thus no two performances can be exactly the same – there can be no *true* gender. If one takes this to be true, the men and women presented in literature take on new life, not as examples of the categories to which they have been assigned, but as various possibilities a reader can choose to accept or reject from their own understanding of gendered expression.

In 2013, Jonathan Todres and Sarah Higinbotham published an article in the fall issue of *Columbia Human Rights Law Review* that addressed the importance of children’s literature in establishing a framework by which children can measure their experience of the world; they argued that “children’s literature, like all narratives that contribute to our moral sense of the world, help children construct social expectations and frame an understanding of their own

specific rights and responsibilities” (1). Children’s literature plays an important role in the process of self-actualization that children undergo, and just as adults and peers model various behaviors and performances of identity to children, so too do the books that they read. On a more specific note, this concept can be seen in action through L.M. Montgomery’s Anne series, and with this concept in mind, it is far easier to consider the implications of Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity.

Montgomery’s Anne series demonstrates the many variations of womanhood – even within a closed community of practice – and through those variations supports Butler’s argument concerning the gendered categories’ inexhaustive nature. Anne’s initial position outside of this dominant community of practice more effectively demonstrates the process by which children take in the examples modeled to them in order to appropriately perform gender; in addition to her interaction with women of Avonlea however, Anne also brings a knowledge of literature to her own development. By mythologizing femininity according to her experience of literature, Anne’s interaction with the performed womanhood in *Anne of Green Gables* establishes her position as a stand in for the child reader. As a child reader herself, Anne grapples with the complexity of growing up, and questions the arbitrary lines between genders; in play, she encourages the little girls of Avonlea to follow her across the threshold of possibility and embrace the notion that they can be fair ladies or knights of the round table without regard to the social expectations placed upon them.

While Anne’s position as a child reader encourages Montgomery’s own readers to recognize an element of sameness with the heroine it is Anne’s position as a “stray woman child” at this stage within the larger narrative that ultimately informs our reading of her. Though she has been categorized according to a preconceived inevitability, Anne has strayed from the

social norm, and her continuing exploration of gender questions the norms within her chosen community of practice allowing her to construct a more complete identity.

Montgomery's decision to have her heroine grow up alongside her readers allows them the opportunity to visualize the various paths their own transition from childhood to adulthood could take. The changes Anne displays from one book to the next demonstrate Anne's transition from girl to woman – within Avonlea's community of practice; this transition illustrates how the incorporation of accepted gendered behaviors into a child's own performance influences their acceptance into various communities of practice.

Beyond Anne's own performance of womanhood however, Montgomery refuses to shy away from the possibility of an unfulfilling future. Anne catches glimpses of what her life could be like if she – like Miss Lavendar – chose not to embrace her transition to adulthood. The main method through which Montgomery demonstrates the arrested development of Lavendar Lewis is through Lavendar's mythologizing of Echo Lodge; this behavior – which heretofore had stood as an example of childhood experimentation – is now representative of a woman's refusal to be recognized as a woman, and ultimately to engage with *any* community of practice. It is not Miss Lavendar's rejection of traditional expectations of womanhood that Montgomery thus questions, but rather her rejection of society as a whole; we know this to be the case because of two factors. The first factor being Miss Lavendar's eventual happiness once she welcomes society back into her life – first through Anne and Diana then through Paul and Stephen Irving. The second factor however, comes through the other – more successful – examples of women who reject traditional expectations *without* rejecting society.

Miss Lavendar's arrested development in *Anne of Avonlea* makes Anne's own struggles in *Anne of the Island* that much more clear. Anne's regression – as seen through her interaction

with the mythic feminine – demonstrates how gender expression is reliant on an individual's performance of that gender; in choosing to perform behaviors of girlhood Anne herself was relegated to that role while her peers progressed without her.

Anne's eventual acceptance of her position outside of Avonlea society leads her to create her own communities of practice in which she can perform womanhood according to her own choices. With that growth of character, Anne also develops the ability to choose whose opinion can impact how she feels about herself, and by what metric she is measuring the validity of her own existence.

Montgomery's celebration of the changes girls experience as they become women provides her readers with examples – rich in their variation – of fulfilling performances of gender, and as Montgomery demonstrates through Anne's hesitance that fulfillment has to come from a willingness to set aside childhood and grow up. Unwillingness leads to dissatisfaction.

When all is said and done, no two women in Montgomery's Anne series perform their gender in exactly the same way, but all of their performances are recognizable and dynamic; because of this it is easy to see the possibilities in continuing this scholarship. Despite reaching adulthood by *Anne of the Island*, Anne's gender identity still has room to grow and change. Just as in the real world, when Anne meets new people and considers perspectives different from her own she uncovers additional complexities in her own conception of self.

WORKS CITED

- Beauvoir, Simone De. *The Second Sex*. Translated by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier, Vintage Books, 2011.
- Blewett, Kelly. "An Unfortunate Lily Maid: Transgressive Reading in Anne of Green Gables." *The Lion and the Unicorn (Brooklyn)*, vol. 39, no. 3, 2015, pp. 275–293, doi.org/10.1353/uni.2015.0028.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 2006.
- . "Judith Butler: Looking Back on 'Gender Trouble.'" *YouTube*, www.youtube.com/watch?v=tUSb5vEcdFQ&list=LL&index=4&ab_channel=OtwartyUnwersytet.
- Chodorow, Nancy. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. University of California Press, 1984.
- Dinnerstein, Dorothy. *The Mermaid and the Minotaur*. Other Press, 2021.
- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*. Vintage Books, 1990.
- . *The Use of Pleasure*. Vintage Books, 1990.
- Honeyman, Susan E. "Lies We Tell Sick Children: Mutual Pretense and Uninformed Consent in Cancer Narratives." *The Lion and The Unicorn*, vol. 40 no. 2, 2016, p. 179-195. *Project MUSE*, [doi:10.1353/uni.2016.0021](https://doi.org/10.1353/uni.2016.0021).
- Mcquillan, Julia, and Julie Pfeiffer. "Why Anne Makes Us Dizzy: Reading 'Anne of Green Gables' from a Gender Perspective." *Mosaic (Winnipeg)*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2001, pp. 17–32.
- Montgomery, L.M. *Anne of Avonlea*. Bantam, 1998.
- . *Anne of Green Gables*. Bantam, 1998.
- . *Anne of the Island*. Bantam, 1998.

Paechter, Carrie. *Being Boys, Being Girls: Learning Masculinities and Femininities*. Open University, 2007.

Risman, Barbara J. *Gender Vertigo: American Families in Transition*. Yale University Press, 1999.

Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. Translated by Sarah Richmond, Washington Square Press, 2021.

Todres, Jonathan and Higinbotham, Sarah. "A Person's a Person: Children's Rights in Children's Literature." *Columbia Human Rights Law Review*, Vol. 45, Issue 1, pp 1-56, 2013, Georgia State University College of Law, Legal Studies Research Paper No. 2014-03, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2234163>

Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Penguin Books, 2004.

Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. Penguin Books, 2004.

VITA

Author: Lauren M. Hinshaw

Place of Birth: Walla Walla, Washington

Undergraduate Schools Attended:
Walla Walla University

Degrees Awarded:
Bachelor of Arts in English Literature & Creative Writing, 2020, Walla Walla University

Honors and Awards:
Graduate Assistantship, Provost's Office, 2021-22, Eastern Washington University

Professional Experience:
Internship, English Department of EWU, Cheney, WA 2022