"So much scope for the imagination": Subversive Social Performativity and Spiritual Synthesis in Anne of Green Gables

Sarah Wallingford
Trinity College, swallingford@cfu.net

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Senior Thesis

"So much scope for the imagination": Subversive Social Performativity and Spiritual Synthesis in *Anne of Green Gables*

submitted by
Sarah Wallingford 2015

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Director: Dr. Katherine Bergren
Reader: Dr. Daniel Mrozowski
Reader: Dr. Sarah Bilston
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“Imperfect things still have value.”
Introduction

In her 2013 *Statesman* article “I hate Strong Female Characters,” Sophia McDougall takes issue with the fact that “Sherlock Holmes gets to be brilliant, solitary, abrasive, Bohemian, whimsical, brave, sad, manipulative, neurotic, vain, untidy, fastidious, artistic, courteous, rude, a polymath genius. Female characters get to be Strong” (n.p.). McDougall laments the fact that, even in 2015, “the film industry believes the world is more ready for a film featuring a superhero who is a raccoon than it is for a film led by a superhero who is a woman” and that, too often, contemporary film and television depicts female strength as a one-dimensional capacity for physical violence that marks a “strong female character” as different than normal, “weak” women. McDougall’s article articulates the core sentiments of a recent backlash against the “strong female character” and a growing awareness of how infrequently well-rounded women are represented in popular culture. While contemporary audiences can speak of female characters in terms of “feminist” or “anti-feminist” depictions, recent female characters whom we consider active and nuance have evolved from a long tradition of female characters who struggle with gendered systems of authority in periods that pre-date the feminist movement as we currently understand it. Though a contemporary understanding of gender dynamics may cause readers to dismiss older novels as “antifeminist” in nature, part of what makes a female character active and progressive is her struggle against the power structures of her own time, not ours.

L. M. Montgomery’s 1908 classic *Anne of Green Gables*, still widely read today, features an imaginative, loquacious orphan who arrives on Prince Edward Island (P.E.I.), Canada, expecting to be adopted by a middle-aged brother and sister who were
themselves expecting to adopt a boy to assist them on their farm. Despite the initial miscommunication, Matthew and Marilla Cuthbert decide to keep eleven-year-old Anne Shirley, who chatters her way into their affection. Anne’s exploits, which include arriving for church with a hat covered in wildflowers, and her questions, such as why girls cannot become ministers, cause a stir in the quiet town of Avonlea. After a series of mishaps, like accidentally intoxicating her new best friend by confusing currant wine for raspberry cordial and dying her hair green in an attempt to have the raven-black tresses she covets, Anne grows into an accomplished young woman, who wins multiple academic awards and dares to dream of a college education often denied to young women of her time.

Unfortunately, tragedy strikes at the end of the novel, and her adopted father dies suddenly of a heart attack after losing everything when main regional bank fails. With Marilla left alone and losing her eyesight, Anne decides to turn down a prestigious college scholarship and teach in Avonlea in order to be near Marilla. Although Anne spurns a number of suitors, she goes on to marry her rival-turned-first-love, and sequels show her settled into a conventional domesticity, raising several children. Anne is curious, proud, impulsive, clever, ambitious, vain, generous, loving, and loyal, and her questions challenge Avonlea’s tired old traditions and social structures. However, despite her potential to be a progressive female character, critics like Julia McQuillan and Julie Pfeiffer argue that her decision to stay in Avonlea and later settle for a domestic life of motherhood reflect her failure to break the mold in any meaningful way, and that her time in Avonlea tames her wild imagination and transgressive nature into a good, conventional Christian young woman.

For example, McQuillan and Pfeiffer suggest that “books such as *Anne of Green*
Gables have often been seen as supportive of girls as powerful actors, they still reinforce the gendered social structure” (n.p.). They ask why so many readers enjoy this book when it “privileged values that can be sexist and offensive,” concluding that the visibility of gender structures at work in the novel provides just enough challenge, and subsequently, just enough comfort for a reader. McQuillan and Pfeiffer claim that readers “enjoy these novels because they reaffirm the gender structure that organizes our culture: girls and boys are different. Difference is good. Those who act in ways that defy their identification as male or female need to be corrected.” Yet I find it difficult to believe that generations of well-educated women have deeply connected with this novel simply because it reinforces strict gender divisions.1

While McQuillan and Pfeiffer rightly assert that the Cuthberts’ assumption that Anne will not be as useful on the farm as the boy they intended to hire reflects a rigid, gendered division of labor roles never challenged in the novel, I find this choice contributes to a different challenge of prevailing social attitudes.2 In her annotated edition of the novel, Mary E. Doody Jones notes that Montgomery, in her fiction about children, “attempted to dispel attitudes, set in the eighteenth century and continued into her time, holding orphans and poor children as cheap labor” and worked to “change attitudes toward the vulnerable young, as valuable simply for themselves” (422). At the turn of the century, farm animals enjoyed more legal protections than children, so Mary Rubio sees Anne’s passion for naming plants and trees but not animals as an attempt to shift focus away from valuing animals and toward valuing childhood creativity.3 A portrayal of Anne

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1 For discussion of how Anne has resonated with readers over the last century, see Temma F. Berg, "Anne  
2 See also Carol Gay, "'Kindred Spirits' All': Green Gables Revisited" (1982).  
3 In order to override prejudices and drive the point home, Montgomery makes Anne exceptionally articulate and charismatic. Despite her orphaned status, Anne’s origins matter to Marilla. When evaluating
as useful farm labor would derail Montgomery’s intention to show childhood as a valuable time of creative development.⁴

Though I must admit that the novel does appear to reaffirm a female role of domesticity and motherhood, I remember coming away with a much different impression when I read the novel as a child. I saw Anne as a radical character, and I embarked on this project to see if I could find textual evidence to support my instincts, or if I was projecting onto the book a feminist praxis that did not exist. Upon closer study, I realized that some of Anne’s most subversive moments were ones that seemed somewhat mundane on the surface, and despite turn-of-the-century limitations on a young woman’s agency and independence, Anne models a striking amount of agency. As Mary Rubio notes, “it is not fitting that we censure historical novels (or domestic novels with a historical setting) for accurately reflecting the time in which they are set” (“Architect” 186). She sees a double-discourse at work in the novel, which supplies an “overt, conventional discourse to satisfy the conventional reader, and a second, subversive discourse to challenge the status quo” (qtd. in Gammel 230). Because the publishing conventions of her day required a clear didacticism in children’s fiction, Montgomery found it necessary to engage in this double discourse, inserting traditional morals into her stories in order to publish her work. However, she takes advantage of the “Sunday-

Anne, Marilla notes that “there's nothing rude or slangy in what she does say. She's ladylike. It's likely her people were nice folks” (Montgomery 89). Marilla’s appraisal suggests that, had Anne been less ladylike or articulate, Marilla would have been less likely to empathize and take her in. For more, see Margaret Anne E. Doody, “The Exceptional Orphan Anne: Child Care, Orphan Asylums, Farming Out,Indenturing, and Adoption.” (2007).

⁴ Emily Cardinali Cormier claims that, rather than reaffirming traditional gender expectations, the novel ultimately posits the erudite agrarian woman as a meaningful element in the re-valuation of Canadian rural identity. Thus, the novel suggests that "a woman's intellect, rather than her reproductive potential, can comprise her chief contribution to nation-building" (Cormier 206). Cormier focuses on Anne's intellectual journey as one that presents a progressive model for intelligent young women to participate in revitalizing agrarian communities rather than a journey that is cut short by selling out to traditional female domesticity.
School” genre, in which a questioning child (often an orphan) learns to practice Christian piety (Doody 98). Traditionally, the child’s questions create opportunities to deliver Christian morals, but Elizabeth Waterston notes that Anne’s rejection of the “justifications and codifications of adult creeds” are “not only sympathetically presented in the novel but actually become the means of converting others” (159). Multiple critics use this term, “conversion,” for what Anne does with adults in her life. While it does address Anne’s extraordinary ability to get away with challenging the status quo, it strikes me as inaccurate. Rather than “converting” adults to mimic her behavior—to create fantastic alternate realities or to fake their way through unappealing social requirements—Anne charms adults into accepting her for who she is rather than who they want her to be. The difference between “converting” and “charming” is key. As Waterston rightly asserts, Anne is not a revolutionary character but a revisionary character—she does not entirely throw off the dominant social structure so much as she pushes the boundaries, negotiating a new, small space for her to live her own way. This negotiation opens up a new dimension in the work Montgomery does with Anne’s character. Montgomery does not use Anne to overthrow a patriarchal gender binary but to show how girls can survive and flourish within such a binary.\footnote{Waterston does suggest that Anne indeed challenges this binary, as she is neither explicitly feminine nor traditionally tomboy-ish like many analogous characters in children’s literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.} I believe that McQuillan and Pfeiffer, among others, underestimate the subversive potential of Montgomery’s double discourse, and in this thesis, I analyze two of Anne’s most significant negotiations with strict social and moral boundaries.

In exploring how Rubio’s concept of double discourse operates in terms of Anne’s public behaviors and approach to religion, I also intend to contradict critics like

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5 Waterston does suggest that Anne indeed challenges this binary, as she is neither explicitly feminine nor traditionally tomboy-ish like many analogous characters in children’s literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
John Seelye, who declares that “Anne of Green Gables has no obvious subtext; what you read is pretty much what you get. There is sufficient intertextual larding to satisfy the historian of children’s literature, but beyond this we are given no dark shadows of implication” (333). Seeyle wonders at the popular demand for sequels to Anne, which “suggests that the readers, most of whom we must assume were female in gender, liked whatever it was that Montgomery was doing, and as we shall see, for all of her dependency on her contemporaries, she hit a note that none of the others were able to reach” (333). In a similarly dismissive way, Perry Nodelman suggests that Anne’s idyllic world of celebrated childhood attracts readers because of its simplicity, its lack of action, and its lack of conflict (34-35). Catherine Sheldrick Ross agrees, noting that “[u]nfortunately for Montgomery’s reputation, literary critics in this century have had little use for books that help readers to feel secure,” prioritizing “texts that challenge our expectations, dislodge us from the security of cherished beliefs, shatter our complacencies, split open the congealed surfaces of things, and propel us into new adventures of transgression and defamiliarization” (424). This thesis argues that Anne is not a “safe” text and that Montgomery’s double discourse hides moments of striking social subversion in plain sight. By analyzing these moments, I will demonstrate how a text that appears to ultimately reassert a gendered social order can offer insight into how young women can navigate strict social expectations. Anne’s challenges to Avonlea’s traditions and customs create moments where female readers can read against the grain and glean feminist inspiration from an otherwise unprogressive text. The black-and-white question “Is this or isn’t it feminist” misdirects attention away from the nuances that inflect a female reader’s experience. Dismissing the progressive nuances within Anne
means dismissing the nuances that necessarily accompany life within societies shaped by patriarchy and Christian-centric ideologies.

In my first chapter, I shall explore how Anne learns to reimagine social expectations as if they were theatrical roles. Anne loves to role-play literary characters, recite poetry, and imagine herself as anything from a dryad to a noble lady, and she learns to apply her theatrical abilities to necessary behaviors that she finds distasteful. The enjoyment she finds in performing a role allows her to negotiate social expectations thrust upon her and to turn required behaviors into entertainment. In my second chapter, I will analyze the intersection of imagination, paganism, and Presbyterianism in Anne’s approach to spirituality. While many critics assume that Anne follows a Sunday-School conversion narrative from pagan to Christian, I argue that Anne creates her own radical synthesis of pagan and Christian. In merging her pagan inclinations with the Christianity she encounters in Avonlea, Anne infuses traditional worship with an appreciation of nature and imagination, creating a joy in worship that she finds lacking at Sunday School. These two chapters will demonstrate how Anne uses her imagination to navigate the rules and systems given to her, creating a subversive second discourse within a seemingly conventional plot arc.
Chapter I
“Saying one’s prayers isn’t exactly the same thing as praying”:
Anne’s Multiple Performativities

Introduction:
Beyond recreational play-acting and recitations of poetry, Anne translates the performative elements of her recreational playtime into a functional approach to her everyday life by treating externally-imposed behavioral expectations as roles to be taken up when necessary and cast off when no longer immediately required. In doing so, she moves beyond merely reenacting classic literary texts, explored by critics like Ann F. Howey, or dramatically narrating her daily thoughts to others and instead engages in deliberate acts of imaginative transgression. Though critics like Shirley Foster and Judy Simons have seen that Anne’s irrepressible imagination and unorthodox understanding of her world challenges the restrictive rules of Avonlea society, critics fall short in considering the practical model that Anne’s behavior establishes for young readers. Foster and Simons note that, in Anne’s famous apology to Rachel Lynde, “not only the deceptiveness of conclusions drawn from appearances, but also the hypocrisies of conventional ethical codes, are exposed here.” They suggest that, “[b]y developing and following her own unique ‘pragmatism which, without theorizing, radically questions and judges ostensible righteousness,’ Anne takes on an iconoclastic role within Avonlea, calling attention to the pretension of certain social expectations (Foster and Simons 168). However, I shall argue that the fundamental efficacy of Anne’s convention-challenging role in Avonlea arises from her understanding of socially-mandated behaviors—like Christian worship, humble apologies and confessions of wrongdoing—as voluntary
performances that need not reflect a genuine adherence to societal expectations.

Anne redirects the roles she performs for personal entertainment into an exploration of functional roles performed for others in order to satisfy social expectations. The multiple layers of Anne’s performativities necessitate a new vocabulary to keep each approach separate. In her groundbreaking work on gender, Judith Butler concludes that all gender is itself performance, “in the sense that it is not a stable or fixed point of agency, but rather is an identity category created and constituted through ‘a stylized repetition of acts’” (qtd. in Webster 4). However, to distinguish Anne’s various performativities from the basic, foundational performativity that Butler discusses, I loosely categorize Anne’s performances into two categories: pleasurable (performances undertaken for self-indulgent entertainment or for explicit public performances like poetry readings) and functional (performances Anne enacts in daily life in order to convince adults she has internalized socially-prescribed roles and thereby escape nagging or punishment for failing to conform). Anne engages in pleasurable performances in order to entertain herself or others, pretending to be the Lady Cordelia in the privacy of her bedroom or playing Hope in a class concert performance of “The Fairy Queen.” The theatrical and fictional natures of these performances remain clear to everyone involved. The functional performances, however, involve Anne putting on a façade intended to convince her audience of her sincerity and of the veracity of her self-presentation. While Anne’s pleasurable performativities, most notably her performance of the Lady of Shallot, suffer no lack of attention, critics overestimate the effectiveness of such performances in establishing Anne as a subversive literary figure. For instance, Howey discusses how Anne’s performance of Elaine demonstrates Anne’s ability to
make stories her own by rewriting passive female characters as active participants in their own lives and in their own rescues. During a reenactment of Tennyson’s “The Lady of Shallot,” Anne finds herself sinking into the river, as the rowboat she and her friends appropriated to use as Lady Elaine’s barge has a hole in the bottom. Howey claims that, by leaping to her own rescue, Anne subverts the expectation that girls must helplessly wait for another’s aid. Yet, this self-sufficiency seems to be a thin argument for agency; would any real adolescent simply sit in a boat to drown? Acting on basic human survival instincts does not make a strong case for progressive female agency.

Because Anne begins to perform a specific, pre-established role on only her second day with the Cuthberts, her relationship with Green Gables and with Avonlea develops around performance. As a naturally imaginative and dramatic child, Anne imbues every moment of her life with some form of theatricality, be it naming and personifying the geranium in the window box or acting out “The Lady of Shallott” with friends. She constantly “performs” for a variety of audiences: from providing Matthew with a verbose, descriptive monologue about her day to responding to any mention of Gilbert Blythe with hyperbolic disdain. Her performances range from seemingly instinctive—she reveals no thought or deliberate artifice in the performance—to charming—she amplifies or deemphasizes certain aspects of her personality in order to charm an audience—to pleasurable—she performs the role primarily for herself and her own entertainment—to functional. These functional performances appear during moments of social pressure, which reveal Anne’s awareness that sometimes one must perform a distasteful role in order to satisfy social expectations—and that by choosing to see the fulfillment of these expectations as performing a role, one can avoid
compromising one’s principles, reject the internalization of these expectations, and even enjoy oneself.

I distinguish these performances from Anne’s pleasurable role-playing and poetry recitations, which she undertakes for her own personal amusement and contextualizes as performances of fiction, by referring to them as “functional performances.” In the various situations when adults try to train Anne to fit a particular mold, Montgomery shows Anne getting the upper hand by playing the role adults expect of her without revising her thoughts, opinions, or attitudes. Some of the functional performances I consider “studied” behaviors; that is, Anne recognizes these behaviors as necessary elements of a well-behaved child and engages in them in order to demonstrate her awareness of social norms. These basic behaviors merit acknowledgement but require less analysis than Anne’s “subversive” performances, in which Anne enthusiastically performs a social role (like the penitent apologizer or confessor of wrongdoing) in order to appease authority figures in her life while acknowledging these performances as both temporary and necessary. In this chapter I will discuss what I consider Anne’s two forms of functional performativity, particularly the subversive (cognizant of the slippage between studied, subversive, and pleasurable; multiple performativites may be simultaneously at work in any particular scene). From observation and study, Anne understands the basic requirements of performing the role of a “good girl,” like making one’s bed and offering to wash the dishes at dinner. When she appeals to Marilla Cuthbert in order to stay at Green Gables, Anne performs these basic, studied, elements of her assigned role. She expresses no intention to deceive but simply demonstrates her knowledge of basic social expectations in order to win approval. In contrast, when Anne must perform distasteful
social behaviors, such as making an apology or a confession that she does not mean, Anne subverts social and adult authority by performing. Rather than accepting that she owes an apology or passively suffering a punishment for something she did not do, Anne reinterprets that behavior as a role in order to make it more palatable to herself at the same time as satisfying the adults around her. Anne’s subversive manipulation of such roles allows her an important agency in the face of the rigid social expectations of her patriarchal society.

Anne modifies her performances based on her audience, which usually consists of Rachel Lynde, Marilla Cuthbert, or Matthew Cuthbert. Her awareness of the differences in what each audience expects of her and her ability to take up a social role and then set it aside at will demonstrates the temporary nature of certain social behaviors. Rather than learning to be a “good girl,” that is, a conventional child, at all times, Anne learns how to perform conventional behaviors of the “good girl” when necessary to appease a particular adult without permanently modifying her behavior and molding herself to a conventional standard. By analyzing the functional performances that Anne’s diverse audiences inspire, I argue that she models a subversive agency for young female readers facing restrictive social expectations.

**Anne’s Audiences: Mathew Cuthbert**

Anne’s first audience, the reserved Matthew Cuthbert, represents an initially passive audience that rapidly becomes unconditionally accepting and loving, providing a safe space where Anne can express herself free of censure and without fear of judgment or chastisement. Initially too passive to send her away and then completely enchanted by her charm, Matthew presents no threat to Anne’s security and no danger of rejection.
Recognizing him at once as a “kindred spirit,” Anne comes to Matthew for relief from the pressure of performing a socially-mandated role; Matthew’s passivity and unconditional love for Anne guarantee that she will never need to focus on convincingly performing an undesirable role to satisfy him. Despite finding himself initially taken aback by Anne’s loquacious nature, “Matthew, much to his own surprise, was enjoying himself” on the first drive he takes home with Anne (55). Though “he had never expected to enjoy the society of a little girl,” “[l]ike most quiet folks he liked talkative people when they were willing to do the talking themselves and did not expect him to keep up his end of it” (55). He finds “this freckled witch” surprisingly enjoyable company and concludes that he "kind of liked her chatter” (55). When Anne, told all her life that she talks too much and should hold her tongue more often, apologizes for speaking too much, Matthew responds, "Oh, you can talk as much as you like. I don't mind” (55). From their first meeting, Matthew gives Anne explicit permission to speak and to say anything. This expression of complete acceptance sets a precedent for Anne to treat him as a nonjudgmental, patient audience for which she does not have to perform one specific, confining role of good girlhood. He even indulges her bizarre imaginings to the point where he attempts to come up with an example of a “thrill” in his own life in order to play along with Anne’s rambunctious narrative (61). Rather than distancing himself from her performance, Matthew attempts to answer Anne’s numerous questions and engage in her performance as a participant. He never cuts off her stream of dialogue but does his best to fill the gaps she provides for him. Matthew respects and encourages Anne’s individual voice and sense of self, never requesting that she change in any way to please him. Marilla would prefer it “if you could say she was a useful little thing,” but Matthew takes delight in this
“interesting little thing” and values her for that interesting mind rather than prioritizing a functionality (96).

As a result, Anne’s performances for Matthew more closely align with the theatrical role-playing and dramatic expressiveness in which she indulges for her own entertainment. The language and tone that Anne uses as she narrates her first impressions of Prince Edward Island to Matthew during their first ride to Green Gables strongly resembles the tone and language of her private daydreams after her first prayer lesson with Marilla. On their ride home, Anne tells Matthew that she thinks “it would be lovely to sleep in a wild cherry-tree all white with bloom in the moonshine” because “[y]ou could imagine you were dwelling in marble halls” (52-54). The blossoming “white and lacy” cherry trees remind her of “a bride, of course—a bride all in white with a lovely misty veil” (52-54). This creative interpretation of the trees as a grand hall and the trees as beautiful brides maps neatly onto the lavish bedroom and stately persona that Anne later imagines for herself early in her stay at Green Gables. She imagines the floor “covered with a white velvet carpet with pink roses all over it,” the walls “hung with gold and silver brocade tapestry,” and the bed as “a couch all heaped with gorgeous silken cushions, pink and blue and crimson and gold” (108) Anne imagines herself as “tall and regal, clad in a gown of trailing white lace, with a pearl cross on my breast and pearls in my hair” (109). The similarity of these images, in tone and structure, suggests that the description of Prince Edward Island that Anne shares with Matthew represents her style of personal, pleasurable imagination rather than a calculated performance designed to convince him of something.

Throughout Anne’s time at Green Gables, she sees Matthew as “such a sympathetic
listener” and spends many an afternoon “perched out there on the woodpile talking to Matthew;” “when she knows perfectly well she ought to be at her work,” updating him on her life or her newest stories (143-144). Marilla often complains that Matthew “is listening to her like a perfect ninny” and claims that she “never saw such an infatuated man. The more [Anne] talks and the odder the things she says, the more he's delighted evidently” (143). While Marilla sees safety and necessity in conformity with social standards of behavior, Matthew defends Anne’s right to speak her mind, responding, "It's a good thing Rachel Lynde got a calling down; she's a meddlesome old gossip," to Marilla’s news of Anne’s misbehavior when meeting Mrs. Lynde (119). Because Matthew defends Anne’s right to speak, Anne finds in Matthew a safe space to express herself through pleasurable performance, while she takes a functionally performative approach with Marilla. The low-stakes, uncritical audience Matthew provides for Anne’s pleasurable performance highlights the functional nature of her performances for Marilla.

Matthew nurtures Anne’s creative development, always cheering on her academic successes and her writing endeavors. Though often speechless in the face of Anne’s creativity, Matthew remains accepting and nonjudgmental of her antics. While Marilla calls Anne’s “sad, sweet story” entitled “The Jealous Rival; or In Death Not Divided” “stuff and nonsense,” Matthew “said it was fine” (and Anne describes him as “the kind of critic I like”) (280). When Anne narrowly escapes drowning after the Lady of Shallot incident, she declares, “[T]oday's mistake is going to cure me of being too romantic. I have come to the conclusion that it is no use trying to be romantic in Avonlea. It was probably easy enough in towered Camelot hundreds of years ago, but romance is not appreciated now. I feel quite sure that you will soon see a great improvement in me in
this respect, Marilla” (302). Though Matthew “had been sitting mutely in his corner” as Anne recounted the disastrous reenactment of Lady Elaine’s death, he “laid a hand on Anne's shoulder when Marilla had gone out” and whispers "Don't give up all your romance, Anne. . . a little of it is a good thing—not too much, of course—but keep a little of it, Anne, keep a little of it” (302). While Anne’s love of “romance” often separates her from her peers and causes her to behave in ways that stand out (and usually embarrass Marilla in the process), Matthew loves her for it and does not pressure her to reject the theatricality that brings her joy. He offers a nonjudgmental audience for her pleasurable performances and supports the qualities that mark her as different from the other girls in Avonlea.

**Anne’s Audiences: Marilla Cuthbert**

From her first day on Prince Edward Island, Anne recognizes that she must deliberately perform for Marilla in a way that she does not have to with Matthew. While Matthew accepts the madcap, unconventional Anne, Marilla initially presents herself as a less-tolerant audience that encourages Anne to demonstrate her understanding of social expectations and her ability to put these expectations into practice. Marilla immediately wants to send Anne away, and therefore establishes herself as a more active, threatening presence. Because Marilla makes it clear that she wanted a male child for the express purpose of being useful, Anne understands her need, as a doubly marginal orphan girl, to satisfy the status quo in order to retain the opportunity for middle-class stability that the Cuthberts offer.

Because Marilla reacts so negatively to Anne’s arrival, Anne realizes that she must perfectly perform all the behaviors that Marilla expects of a “good girl” in order to
have any chance of staying at Green Gables. When Marilla instructs Anne to “Be as smart as you can” for breakfast the next morning, the narrator notes that “Anne could evidently be smart to some purpose for she was downstairs in ten minutes’ time, with her clothes neatly on, her hair brushed and braided, her face washed, and a comfortable consciousness pervading her soul that she had fulfilled all Marilla’s requirements” (78). Anne knows how to dress herself for the performance of the “perfect” child, but the fact that “she had forgotten to turn back the bedclothes” as instructed reveals that the motions of a “good” child do not necessarily come instinctively to her and that her studied performance relies on stage directions from Marilla. Despite consciously dressing herself to meet “all Marilla’s requirements,” Anne’s inexperience playing the role of the “smart” (here as in neat and clean) girl causes her to forget elements of the performance. For the rest of the morning, she attempts to comply with Marilla’s every demand to the letter and to demonstrate her worth by conforming to expectations of “good girls.” She offers to wash the dishes and makes the bed as soon as Marilla commands. When Marilla tells Anne to hold her tongue, noting that “You talk entirely too much for a little girl,” Anne “held her tongue so obediently and thoroughly that her continued silence made Marilla rather nervous, as if in the presence of something not exactly natural” (78). Of course the silence is not natural; within a few short hours Anne has already established that “chatter” is her default setting. However, since Marilla expects a little girl to speak less, Anne accepts this as a necessary element of her performance as a child good enough to stay at Green Gables.

Anne performs for Marilla because Marilla clearly establishes a preconceived notion of a script that a child and a guardian should follow. Marilla’s investment in
following a traditional script of child-rearing arises from her own unconventional performance of womanhood and a sense of obligation to redeem the transgression of her youth. Marilla, always so focused on doing what is “good” and “proper,” failed to follow the traditional feminine narrative of courtship, marriage, and childbearing. Near the end of the novel, Marilla reveals that she once had a beau of her own, Gilbert Blythe’s father, and that the affair ended because she “wouldn't forgive him when he asked [her] to” (385). She admits, “I meant to, after awhile—but I was sulky and angry and I wanted to punish him first. He never came back—the Blythes were all mighty independent. But I always felt—rather sorry. I've always kind of wished I'd forgiven him when I had the chance” (385). Marilla’s thwarted romance suggests that she failed at performing femininity, first by not marrying and then by rejecting the soft, gentle, comforting role of Mother that Anne desires. To an extent, Marilla herself models a subversive femininity for Anne, but her version of subversion is not depicted positively. Marilla’s regret serves as a cautionary tale for Anne in her own dealings with Gilbert. Not only does Anne’s reconciliation and subsequent romance with Gilbert make up for Marilla’s prideful, failed courtship with his father, but Anne’s presence at Green Gables offers Marilla a second chance to perform womanhood.

However, without any previous experience or natural motherly connection to Anne, Marilla finds herself falling back on a strict, detached, authoritarian model of child-raising. She requires Anne to call her “just plain Marilla” rather than anything familial and looks to raise Anne solely to be a “good” and “useful” girl (102). Rejecting the motherly or even remotely familial relationship that Anne hopes to have (Marilla denies Anne’s request to call her “aunt”), Marilla initially plans to train Anne for
usefulness (102). Marilla intended to adopt “a smart, likely boy of about ten or eleven... old enough to be of some use in doing chores right off and young enough to be trained up proper. We mean to give him a good home and schooling” (45-46). Though Marilla wants a boy, she decides to keep Anne because she “seemed a nice, teachable little thing” and, though Anne has “got too much to say... she might be trained out of that” (89) Indeed, Marilla determines to “make it my business to see she's trained to be [useful],” and within a day, she decides that Anne’s “religious training must be begun at once” (96, 98).

The formal, distant script that Marilla tries to enact in her relationship with Anne fails, due largely in part to Anne’s impulsiveness and tendency toward improvisation but also because she challenges and eventually corrects Marilla’s conceptions of goodness, awakening Marilla’s own transgressive nature. Ever-practical, Marilla, lacking the traditional experience of motherhood, frequently uses “good” as a euphemism for “conventional” or “useful.” She frequently expresses a desire for Anne to be a “good child” and a “good girl,” and this demand serves as a catch-all for any and all of her criticisms of Anne’s behavior. Her primary objection to Anne staying at Green Gables was her desire for a “useful” boy and her unease at her unpreparedness for raising a girl, and her use of “good” applies to everything from little girls to dresses. She describes the dresses she makes for Anne as “good, sensible, serviceable dresses, without any frills or furbelows about them” and depicts Diana Barry as “very nice little girl” who is “good

6 For a further exploration of the text’s assumption that usefulness on a farm is a distinctly male role and how this reinforces antifeminist readings of Anne, see McQuillan, “Why Anne Makes Us Dizzy,” 1999. For a rebuttal and an exploration of the novel’s depiction of women’s unique usefulness in rural Canada at the turn of the century, see Cormier, “‘Have All of Our Women the Vagrant Heart?’: Anne of Green Gables and Rural Womanhood in Flux,” 2010.
and smart, which is better than being pretty" (128, 106). Marilla also repeatedly commands that Anne “sit down quietly and hold your tongue and behave as a good girl should” (95). Marilla consistently attempts to enact a script that will train Anne not to stand out in order to maintain Marilla’s conventional and respectable reputation. Each time she reprimands Anne, she demonstrates her need for Anne to strictly conform to what Avonlea society designates hegemonic behavior; her rebukes rarely focus on the fundamental problems with Anne’s behavior and instead reflect a sense that she must raise Anne to behave a certain way simply because that is how things are done. She criticizes Anne for speaking and acting out against the accepted social conception of the quiet, polite, unremarkable child more than she criticizes Anne for behaving poorly. Most often, concern over social reactions (voiced by Mrs. Lynde) causes her to criticize Anne out of a sense that she “should” criticize her rather than a righteous sense that Anne deserves a reprimand.

As an unconventional and somewhat transgressive figure herself, Marilla finds it unexpectedly difficult to follow her own script, especially when Anne awakens Marilla’s dormant senses of humor and affection. Marilla first enters the novel as “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” (43). On her very first day at Green Gables, Anne’s melodrama upon learning that the Cuthberts may not keep her reaches that underdeveloped sense of humor, and “[s]omething like a reluctant smile, rather rusty from long disuse, mellowed Marilla's grim expression” (67). After maintaining a caustic, militantly proper persona for years, Marilla finds that this effervescent, irreverent child
instantly connects with her own private sense of resistance against the repressive nature of Avonlea society.

Against her better judgement, Marilla finds Anne’s dramatic performances endearing, and though Marilla consistently quells the urge to support Anne’s challenges to the status quo, Montgomery makes clear Marilla’s amusement and sympathy with Anne’s unorthodox perspective. Even at her sternest and least-yielding (before allowing Anne to stay), Marilla finds Anne’s transgressions amusing. When Anne speaks her mind about the nasty Mrs. Blewett (who offers to take Anne off Marilla’s hands before the Cuthberts decide to keep her and who makes it abundantly clear that she would treat Anne as free labor rather than as a child), “Marilla smothered a smile under the conviction that Anne must be reproved for such a speech” (95). While her conviction wins out, Marilla clearly does not object to the content of Anne’s assessment. She merely sees it as her duty to chastise Anne for the expression of such a rude assessment. Marilla’s sympathy for Anne’s direct criticisms and violations of socially acceptable behavior initially suggests a sympathy and amused resignation at Anne’s subversive performances. When Anne criticizes the minister for a lack of imagination in his sermons, “Marilla felt helplessly that all this should be sternly reproved, but she was hampered by the undeniable fact that some of the things Anne had said, especially about the minister's sermons and Mr. Bell's prayers, were what she herself had really thought deep down in her heart for years, but had never given expression to” (133). Anne’s criticism awakens Marilla to these suppressed thoughts, and Marilla finds that “those secret, unuttered, critical thoughts had suddenly taken visible and accusing shape and form in the person of this outspoken morsel of neglected humanity” (133). Despite
Marilla’s verbal rejection of a motherly role and her attempts to train Anne to be a quiet, polite girl, Marilla realizes that she agrees with each critique Anne makes of Avonlea society. Anne becomes more daughter-like as she replicates Marilla’s own secret, unuttered critical thoughts, and she demonstrates a kinship between herself and Marilla by voicing their shared thoughts. Immediately upon her arrival at Green Gables, Anne begins voicing Marilla’s deepest thoughts, well before Marilla could have nurtured those thoughts into existence, suggesting a preternatural similarity between the two women. Marilla’s agreement with Anne’s perspectives on society also suggests that Marilla herself has learned to play a certain role by suppressing her contrary and unconventional perspectives and that Anne’s social performativity has a precedent.

Though Marilla Cuthbert verbally criticizes Anne for improper behavior or statements out of a sense of duty, Montgomery reveals through her narration that Marilla often finds Anne’s misbehavior endearing or justified and that Marilla’s surges of maternal affection for Anne most often occur when Anne is not playing a socially appropriate role but speaks her (critical) mind. These reactions reinforce the subtle subversive lesson of Anne’s performances by presenting her form of performance not as wicked or deceitful but as endearing and as a worthy way to remain true to herself and, in her case, earn familial belonging. This reinforces the fact that Anne is worthy of and receives what she desires most—affection, acceptance, and love—when she is just herself. She does not need to internalize a socially-dictated role in order to be loved. At the same time, Anne awakens Marilla’s own transgressive instincts, transforming the sharp older woman first into an empathetic guardian and then into a nurturing mother.
Anne’s Audiences: Mrs. Rachel Lynde

The Cuthberts’ busybody neighbor, Mrs. Rachel Lynde, is Anne’s most complex and critical audience. In assessing the profound impact of the rules of Montgomery’s social world, particularly as they were defined and reinforced through publications like the *Examiner* and the *Daily Patriot*, upon the world of the novel, Kate Wood argues that Mrs. Lynde acts as a subversive, yet ultimately confining, matriarchal authority within the town of Avonlea. While male voices dominated the media, Mrs. Lynde provides “an illustration of the power derived from female gossip that is only hinted at, filtered through male voices, in the newspapers” and embodies a form of female communication that functions with its own “community power and greatness, providing a counter to the narrow, patriarchally-voiced disparagement presented in the newspapers” (Wood 322). Mrs. Lynde’s command of Avonlea gossip— and the lack of male-dominated news sources or perspectives throughout the novel— establishes her as a greater matriarchal authority within Avonlea as a whole, reflecting and amplifying the matriarchal authority that Marilla asserts within the Cuthbert household. Mrs. Lynde’s utter devotion to overseeing Avonlea’s network of female gossip reveals her to be a social creature, deeply invested in communal bonds and communal conformity. For example, despite her friendship with Marilla, Rachel regards the unmarried Cuthberts as strange in their solitude, remarking that "It's no wonder Matthew and Marilla are both a little odd, living away back here by themselves. Trees aren't much company, though dear knows if they were there'd be enough of them. I'd rather [sic] look at people" (Montgomery 42). Mrs.

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7 “Margaret Atwood sees Marilla as the character socially transformed over the course of the novel, not Anne. She argues that “*Anne of Green Gables* is not about Anne becoming a good little girl: it is about Marilla Cuthbert becoming a good—and more complete—woman” (qtd. In Patchell 132).
Rachel’s enthusiastic involvement in every facet of Avonlea’s decidedly feminine social network marks her as a distinctly different audience than the solitary, female-fearing Matthew.

Marilla’s chastisement over Anne’s outburst with Rachel reflects her fear of Rachel’s social power and her priority of this anxiety over her offense at Anne’s specific comments. When, at their first meeting, Mrs. Lynde calls Anne “terrible skinny and homely” and insults her hair and complexion, Anne bursts out that she hates Mrs. Lynde, calling her a “rude, impolite, unfeeling woman” without “a spark of imagination” (114-115). Though Anne has only been at Green Gables a fortnight, Marilla defends her to Mrs. Lynde, remarking that Rachel “shouldn’t have twitted [Anne] about her looks” (115). Marilla feels a surprising empathy for Anne, remembering a time when she overheard her own aunt describe her as “such a dark, homely little thing” as though it were a “pity” (117). While Marilla scolds Anne for her rudeness, she seems more concerned about the impression Anne made on Mrs. Lynde and how that negative impression could have far-reaching social consequences. She tells Anne that she “made a fine exhibition of [herself] I must say. Mrs. Lynde will have a nice story to tell about you everywhere— and she’ll tell it, too” (117). Anne represents a new threat to Marilla’s reputation. Because negative gossip about Anne will reflect poorly on Anne’s guardian, Marilla stands to lose her reputation as a sharp-minded, conventional, respectable member of the community. Anne’s immediate conflict with Rachel Lynde foreshadows the disruption she will cause in the Cuthbert household and in the Avonlea community due to her refusal to conform to conventional behaviors.

This dynamic is clear when Anne comes across “a golden frenzy of wind-stirred
buttercups and a glory of wild roses” on her way to church in Avonlea for the first time. After she “liberally garlanded her hat with a heavy wreath of them,” she causes a stir among the congregation and prompts Mrs. Lynde to report to Marilla that Anne’s hat was “rigged out ridiculous” (129, 135). Mrs. Rachel tells Marilla that “people talked about it something dreadful” and Marilla concludes that “[o]f course they would think I had no better sense than to let you go decked out like that” (136). While the hat “satisfied Anne,” Marilla sees the escapade as a debacle that will reflect badly on her (129). Of particular concern to Marilla is the fact that “Mrs. Rachel says she thought she would sink through the floor when she saw you come in all rigged out like that” (135). Mrs. Rachel’s embarrassment is equally as important as Marilla’s and indicates the gravity of Anne’s faux pas.

For not only does Mrs. Rachel Lynde represent a dominant female authority within Avonlea, but her character also provides readers with a key way to measure Anne’s development over the course of the novel, through the eyes of someone who loudly and constantly voices dominant social norms. By the time Mrs. Lynde meets Anne for the first time, Montgomery has already established her as the community’s primary deliverer of criticism. Montgomery opens the novel itself not with a description of Anne or the Cuthberts, but with an image of Mrs. Rachel Lynde, surveying the entirety of Avonlea from her window. Montgomery begins the narrative by noting that “Mrs. Rachel was sitting at her window, keeping a sharp eye on everything that passed, from brooks and children up, and . . . if she noticed anything odd or out of place she would never rest until she had ferreted out the whys and wherefores thereof” (40). In so clearly highlighting Rachel Lynde’s role in Avonlea as the gossip who knows everything about everyone,
Montgomery establishes her as the voice of judgment, not only for Anne, but for every member of Avonlea. Readers can consistently look to Mrs. Rachel Lynde for criticism of Anne that reflects the likely reaction of society as a whole toward Anne’s social flaws (such as chattering incessantly when children should be seen and not heard).

Montgomery emphasizes Mrs. Lynde’s role as the primary social judger with the ominous observation that “Anybody who went out of [Avonlea] or into it had to pass over that hill road and so run the unseen gauntlet of Mrs. Rachel’s all-seeing eye” (40).

Casting Mrs. Rachel as the eye watching over all events in Avonlea assigns her a similar role to that filled in later works of fiction by a nameless, character-less narrator who speaks for the town as a whole—like Faulkner’s narrator in “A Rose for Emily”—and characters whose own development takes a backseat to a function as a commenter upon events within the novel. While many adults in Anne’s life criticize Anne’s behavior and Marilla herself critiques various members of the Avonlea community, readers hear most judgments from the voice of Rachel Lynde or from Anne’s paraphrasing of criticisms Rachel expresses. Therefore, Mrs. Lynde’s growing affection for Anne over the course of the novel indicates how Anne learns to convincingly perform socially-mandated behaviors and to conform to social standards enough to satisfy the critical eye of society.

Mrs. Lynde’s judgments frame Anne’s development over the course of the novel, from her pessimistic, disapproving assessment when Marilla first brings over the tempestuous girl (who should have instead been a useful boy) to her acknowledgement that she was “mistaken [about Anne] and I’m real glad of it” (325). Rachel gives voice to the expected criticisms of Anne’s looks, temper, and talkativeness that recur throughout the novel from their very first encounter when she tells Anne that Marilla and Matthew
“certainly didn’t pick you for your looks” (114). This encounter inspires Anne’s first angry outburst, and Mrs. Lynde remarks that “a fair-sized birch switch. . . would be the most effective language for that kind of a child. Her temper matches her hair” (75). Consequently, Rachel’s acceptance of Anne’s apology and encouragement that one day her dreaded hair might turn a more conventionally attractive auburn represents Anne’s first step in learning to perform a role of humility and submission in order to appease society.

The gracious compliment that accompanies Rachel’s acceptance of Anne’s apology reflects the promise of acceptance and comfortable inclusion that society offers those who conform. But Anne means none of her eloquent apology sincerely, and initially refuses to make one. In the end, however, the realization that she could perform such an apology in a way that entertains herself, fools Mrs. Lynde, and appeases Marilla allows Anne to make the apology without accepting the adults’ notion that she did anything wrong or feeling sincerely sorry. Because the apology is a performance, it does not have to be true, and therefore Anne can avoid punishment without modifying her feelings or perspective on the situation. This realization is the catalyst for Anne’s development of a functional, subversive performativity over her time at Green Gables. The fact that an encounter with Mrs. Lynde serves as the catalyst for such a crucial development in a young girl’s relationship with social expectations indicates Mrs. Lynde’s importance as a barometer of such expectations. Throughout Anne’s scrapes and misadventures, Mrs. Lynde serves as the critical voice that comments on Anne’s every behavior and reminds the reader of the social gaze that constantly rests on those acting on the margins.

Because rarely a significant episode in Anne’s life goes by without commentary
from Rachel Lynde, Anne begins to measure her identity against Mrs. Lynde’s opinions. When Anne finds herself confined to bed after falling off a roof during a dare, she observes that Mrs. Lynde’s visits do not comfort so much as chastise, as Rachel “tells you it’s your own fault and she hopes you’ll be a better girl because of it . . . and she said it in a way that make me feel she might hope I’d be a better girl, but didn’t really believe I would” (257). Even when Anne does not feature as the central player in an incident, she comes home to Marilla with Mrs. Lynde’s view. When the town of Avonlea searches for a new minister, Anne peppers her impressions of each candidate, most of which were favorable, with Mrs. Lynde’s criticisms. While she thought one candidate lacked necessary imagination, she still notes that “Mrs. Lynde says his delivery was so poor,” and while she describes another candidate as humorous, she quickly adds that Mrs. Lynde thought “his theology wasn’t sound” (235). Mrs. Lynde’s pronouncement that “it would never do to have a young unmarried minister” likewise joins Anne’s assessment of ministerial candidates (236). Because Marilla establishes Mrs. Rachel as the standard of social judgment, Anne makes an effort to demonstrate that she has absorbed Mrs. Lynde’s point of view and can parrot it. This in itself is a form of performance; because Anne knows that an understanding of social conformity is important to Marilla, she takes care to demonstrate her understanding through reporting Mrs. Lynde’s assessments alongside her own.8

As Anne grows, the way she reacts to Mrs. Lynde’s endless critiques mirrors the

8 Not only Anne parrots Mrs. Lynde. When the girls plan to act out Tennyson’s "Lancelot and Elaine," Ruby Gills questions whether it is right to act a part, because "Mrs. Lynde says that all play-acting is abominably wicked" (Montgomery 296). Though Anne frequently peppers her accounts of events with Mrs. Lynde’s opinions, she does not blindly accept everything that Rachel says as truth. She often challenges Mrs. Lynde’s opinions, as seen when she alters one of Mrs. Lynde adages: “Mrs. Lynde says, ‘Blessed are they who expect nothing for they shall not be disappointed.’ But I think it would be worse to expect nothing than to be disappointed” (Montgomery 147).
way she learns to consider the social norm along with her own feelings each time she
develops or expresses an opinion. Anne documents her own growth, the mental and the
physical, through Mrs. Lynde’s analysis. She describes her growth spurt near the end of
the novel almost entirely through Mrs. Lynde’s own words, telling Marilla that “Mrs.
Lynde says that if I keep stretching out next year as I’ve done this I’ll have to put on
longer skirts. She says I’m all running to legs and eyes” (324). The degree to which Anne
remains constantly cognizant of Mrs. Lynde’s opinions reveals that Mrs. Lynde serves as
a barometer of social expectation in Anne’s life.

Through her criticism and then her praise of Anne’s improvements, Mrs. Lynde
marks Anne’s transition from a young girl navigating social expectations through
performance to a young woman who successfully performs graceful domesticity. Near
the end of the novel, Rachel admits to Marilla that “Anne has turned out a real smart girl”
and “a great help” to Marilla, “while Anne got the tea and made hot biscuits that were
light and white enough to defy even Mrs. Rachel’s criticism” (325). Mrs. Lynde, ever the
judger, admits that she “did make a mistake in judging Anne, but it weren't no wonder,
for an odder, unexpecteder witch of a child there never was in this world, that's what.
There was no ciphering her out by the rules that worked with other children” (325).
Despite Anne’s apparent concessions to conventionality, her legacy is one of “oddness,”
“unexpectedness,” and rule-breaking. Rather than bending to “the rules that worked with
other children,” Anne has forced the adults around her to revise their standard rules and
to “cipher out” Anne’s own logic. At the same time as learning to successfully perform
proper female hospitality, Anne trains her audiences to acknowledge and accommodate
her transgressive nature. In Avonlea, what Rachel says goes, and her assessment of the
unorthodox Anne paired with Anne’s repeated success in evading social lessons through performance suggests that Anne’s unconventionality is unique and to be celebrated, even emulated, rather than to be shunned.

**Anne’s Performances: "I'll try to do and be anything you want me, if you'll only keep me"**

Anne makes it clear that she approaches many tasks that adults require of her as performances. When Marilla demands that she say her prayers before bed, Anne, who has never before been required to do so, approaches the task like an actor preparing a role. She asks, “What am I to say?” and begins “Gracious heavenly father” because “that’s the way the ministers say it in church” (Montgomery 99). After her rather flamboyant prayer (which reflects her interest in putting on a good show for the satisfaction of her audience), she reflects on her performance, asking, “There, did I do it all right?” and notes that she “could have made it much more flowery if I’d had a little more time to think it over” (100). Anne does not approach the prayer as a heartfelt expression of piety but as a performance for an audience— in this case, Marilla, not God. Even afterward, her focus is on the words she chose and how good they sounded, rather than the moral content they reflect. Anne’s prioritization of aesthetics and lack of interest in piety contradicts Julia McQuillan and Julie Pfeiffer’s claim that while Anne questions the wisdom or logic of adults’ expectations, she also “actively engages in trying to be the morally good girl she desperately wants to be in order to be accepted and loved” (n.p.). Far from trying to be a “morally good girl,” Anne aspires to appear as such in order to please Marilla, despite a lack of interest in understanding and fully participating in Presbyterian practices and beliefs.
Though Anne later comes to consider herself Christian, as I discuss in my second chapter, this incident reveals her awareness of a distinction between empty ritual and meaningful spiritual engagement. I will argue that, even after developing a sincere interest in Christian practice, Anne’s attraction to Christianity remains largely aesthetic in nature compared to the depth of faith expected from the protagonist of a conversion narrative. Though she herself feels no need to pray and does not understand its value on a personal religious level, she recognizes its importance to Marilla and performs a prayer for the sake of her audience.

Even more subversive is the fact that, as Anne continues to perform her way through unappealing requirements, she also attains the love and acceptance that she so desperately wants— without permanently transforming herself into the devout Presbyterian child that other others expect her to be. While adults repeatedly correct Anne, she rejects the majority of their suggestions while managing to placate them at the same time.

When adults require her to behave in a certain way in order to have her desires met, Anne initially resists on principle. She cannot sacrifice her sense of identity and justice to the demands of others. Yet she finds that adults withhold things that she desperately wants in order to train her to behave a certain way. During the incident of the lost brooch, which I discuss below, Marilla hopes to train Anne to admit to wrong-doing by keeping her from the church picnic until she confesses. But rather than learning to confess what she has done wrong, Anne learns that she can fake a convincing confession to something she did not do. Transforming the expected behavior into a role for herself to play turns a loss— submitting to distasteful adult requirements— into a double success—
an enjoyable acting practice combined with getting what she wants. By choosing to see social expectations as roles, she achieves her desire without compromising her principles, a practice she can adapt to a variety of standards imposed on her by a patriarchal society. Through deliberate acts of deception like the ones I discuss below, Anne turns her imagination into a transgressive force and models a way for young female readers to appease those around them while rejecting any internalization of distasteful social expectations. McQuillan and Pfeiffer conclude that because of the capitulations Anne must eventually make to easily navigate her patriarchal world, readers cannot see in Anne any true resistance to traditional gender roles; readers “can only celebrate the fact that her struggle, like her dizzying language, forces us to see the world around us from a new perspective” (n.p.). Yet this statement ignores the importance of these small victories. Through these transgressive moments, readers can not only enjoy the satisfying, idealistic, whimsical nature of Anne’s story, but they can also find a model of defiant self-determination. Anne certainly teaches her readers the necessity of compromise, of appearing to meet social expectations in order to live happily within a rigid and patriarchal society, but she also demonstrates the possibility of remaining true to one’s own principles and beliefs at the same time.

Anne’s first experience with prayer offers a low-stakes example of studied performance. Horrified that Anne never says any prayers, Marilla tells Anne that “God always wants little girls to say their prayers” and asks, “Don’t you know who God is, Anne?” (97) After Anne replies “promptly and glibly” with a technically correct response that she clearly does not understand, she goes on to tell Marilla she likes the catechism “pretty well” because “[t]here’s something splendid about some of the words” (98). She
finds it “grand,” and “just like a big organ playing,” an art form that she collapses with poetry, even if “‘[y]ou couldn’t quite call it poetry. . .’” (98). Anne’s interest in prayer focuses entirely on the language and the artistic, performative aspect of talking to God rather than on any religious content; she offers a dramatic monologue rather than an invitation to holy dialogue. While catechisms and prayers express beliefs and direct a worshipper’s attention to God, art prioritizes the expression of human emotion. The artistic elements of Christian worship that speak to her emotions, rather to a sense of spirituality, most appeal to Anne. The words of the catechism inspire the same feeling as the sound of an organ—beautiful, impressive sounds with no semantic value. While in the context of a religious tradition, the catechism and organ music are meant to draw a worshipper toward spiritual meaning, the impressive sound of the music and the poetic flow of the words capture Anne’s full attention; she expresses no interest in the meanings.

Though prayer often serves a ritual function within religious practice, among believers, ritual should connect to a genuine faith or reflect a desire for closeness with God. Anne does not consider herself a Christian at this point in her life (which she establishes in Chapter XXI when she says that she would like to be a Christian after encountering an attractive example of the devout Presbyterian life). Going through the motions of a ritual without connecting them to a deeper meaning and without believing in their symbolism renders the ritual an empty performance of meaningless gestures. When Marilla asks Anne if she will say her prayers, Anne replies "Why, of course, if you want me to…I'd do anything to oblige you,” performing the rituals of a faith she does not believe purely in order to satisfy Marilla’s expectation that Anne engage in such a ritual.
Anne recognizes the ritual as empty and demonstrates no interest in connecting to the underlying meaning of the practice. As Margaret Anne E. Doody notes in her annotated edition of the novel, “[t]he story of an orphan girl being taught to pray had an immediate appeal for a Victorian audience,” which offers Montgomery the perfect opportunity to engage in double discourse (97). She foregrounds a standard step in the conversion narrative in order to satisfy publishers’ expectations that children’s literature be didactic, and then she uses Anne’s relentless curiosity and awareness of optional social roles to highlight the pointlessness of teaching a ritual without a deeper significance and of engaging in a ritual without connecting with that significance.

If Anne must say prayers for Marilla in order to stay at Green Gables, she will perform those prayers beautifully. She approaches the simple bedtime prayer as an actor approaches a stage role, telling Marilla, “you’ll have to tell me what to say for this once. After I get into bed I’ll imagine out a real nice prayer to say always” (97). She anticipates the experience as “quite interesting,” and she promptly kneels at Marilla’s knee when Marilla tells her she must. Anne continues to make it abundantly clear that the goal of her prayer is to perform the expected role as well as possible, and she peppers this performance with questions and analytical comments that reveal her performative approach. Like an actor researching a role, she asks, “Why must people kneel down to pray?” and “What am I to say?” (99). After the prayer, Anne notes that she “should have said ‘Amen’ in place of ‘yours respectfully,’ shouldn’t I? I’d forgotten it, but I felt a prayer should be finished off in some way, so I put in the other “ (100). Having studied catechism and observed ministers’ prayers, Anne has a vague sense of what type of words, structure, and gestures to use. She knows that people must kneel down to pray, but
not why. Anne’s instinctive use of “yours respectfully” and later recognition of her error suggests that Anne’s her modes of expression are epistolary (and thus, literary) rather than theological. While she may understand the linguistic patterns that distinguish the two, religious expression requires more thought and effort for Anne than a letter or a poem recitation. Her lack of experience with religion allows her only a basic theoretical understanding of the content and method of a prayer, and no information about the theological intent or reasoning behind prayer. By revealing her thought process to Marilla, she makes Marilla complicit in her performance, turning the straightforward, didactic script of child-rearing that Marilla hopes to follow on its head. In complicating the role of the dutiful, good, conforming child that Marilla sets out for her, Anne imbues a socially-prescribed role with her own sense of performativity and rejects the internalization of the religious devotion and commitment that Marilla means to inspire.

Marilla finds her traditional script of raising a child constantly challenged by Anne’s performative approach to social roles. When Marilla demands that Anne apologize for insulting Mrs. Rachel at their initial meeting, Anne finds herself for the first time required to do something she absolutely refuses to do. Prepared to stay in her room forever on principle rather than make an apology she does not mean, Anne finds her way out through performance. In treating the apology like a role, like an imaginative exercise, Anne can amuse herself, appease Marilla, and maintain her sense of principle. As soon as Anne agrees to apologize, Marilla can sense that Anne has already derailed Marilla’s attempt at punishment. She finds herself unsettled by Anne’s “imagining out what [she] must say to Mrs. Lynde” and “could not rid herself of the notion that something in her scheme of punishment was going askew. Anne had no business to look so rapt and
radiant” (122). Anne knows that she must apologize, and so she will, but performative role-playing allows her to do so on her own terms.

Anne’s apology hits all the notes of utter contrition. She assures Mrs. Lynde, “with a quiver in her voice,” that she “could never express all [her] sorrow, no, not if [she] used up a whole dictionary” (122). She describes herself as a disgrace, “a dreadfully wicked and ungrateful girl,” who deserves “to be punished and cast out by respectable people forever,” and positively begs for Mrs. Lynde’s forgiveness (122). Though sincerity “breathed in every tone of her voice,” Marilla notices “in dismay that Anne was actually enjoying her valley of humiliation—was reveling in the thoroughness of her abasement. Where was the wholesome punishment upon which she, Marilla, had plumed herself? Anne had turned it into a species of positive pleasure” (123). Anne takes Marilla’s punishment, refashions it into a mere role, and derives pleasure from it rather than punishment. However, “Good Mrs. Lynde, not being overburdened with perception, did not see this,” and Anne’s deception is a success (123). This first lesson in how easily one can pacify social demands without truly capitulating awakens Anne to the possibility of pleasing people in order to reach her own desired ends without sacrificing self-respect or identity. As with her assessment of her performance of prayer, she confides in Marilla that she thinks “apologized pretty well” and had resigned herself to “do it thoroughly if she had to do it at all” (125). Again, Anne chooses to focus on form and delivery rather than content, which allows her to conceive of the apology as the performance of a role rather than bowing to Marilla’s demand that she apologize.

Marilla tries not to condone Anne’s subversive, performative approach to an apology. But to her dismay, Marilla finds “herself inclined to laugh over the recollection.
She had also an uneasy feeling that she ought to scold Anne for apologizing so well; but then, that was ridiculous!” (125). Anne’s performative approach to social roles disrupts Marilla’s conventional script. Marilla is both aware of Anne’s performance and unable to scold Anne for it. Marilla’s private amusement again enforces for young female readers that not only is Anne’s performative approach to required behaviors a way to avoid wholly submitting to the pressure of social expectations, but also such a performance will not come at the cost of love and acceptance. It is possible to refuse to internalize social expectations and to live comfortably within a society governed by a set of restrictive norms. In fact, Marilla feels one of her greatest surges of affection for Anne at this moment of subversive behavior. When Anne slips her hand into Marilla’s to express her delight at feeling as though she belongs at Green Gables, “something warm and pleasant welled up in Marilla’s heart at the touch of that thin little hand in her own—a throb of the maternity she had missed, perhaps” (126). Because of her dedication to a detached, traditional guardian role, the “very unaccustomedness and sweetness [of Anne’s gesture] disturbed her. She hastened to restore her sensations to their normal calm by inculcating a moral” (126). Anne’s growing awareness of the fact that she can manipulate social performances makes it increasingly difficult for Marilla to hew to the role of the strict converter and trainer of a well-behaved Christian child that she has chosen for herself. Again focusing her expectations for Anne on a nebulous concept of being “good” (that is, conventional), Marilla pontificates, “If you'll be a good girl you'll always be happy, Anne. And you should never find it hard to say your prayers.”9 Anne’s response neatly sums up

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9 Notably, Mrs. Lynde is repeatedly described throughout the novel as a “good lady” or “that good lady,” and Anne’s frequent reference to her own lack of goodness based on her divergence from Mrs. Lynde’s opinion of goodness creates a dichotomy between Rachel and Anne, between good and “wicked,” between conventional and transgressive, between social and individual (72).
the lesson she has learned from the ordeal: “Saying one’s prayers isn’t exactly the same thing as praying” (126). Though Marilla intends to impart the lesson that Anne cannot behave rudely toward adults and must respect Marilla’s authority while at Geen Gables, Anne learns something entirely different: a performance of a prayer or an apology is not the same thing as meaning a prayer or an apology, but one who understands that distinction can fool others who do not. This knowledge gives Anne a remarkable agency as she faces social pressures to conform and to perform roles she does not like. By approaching these behaviors as roles, Anne carves out a space for her own agency, sense of self, and rejection of an automatic internalization of the conventional behaviors forced upon her.

After her success in forcing Anne to apologize to Rachel Lynde, Marilla believes she has found the key to bending Anne’s behavior to her will. Marilla assumes, in line with McQuillan and Pfeiffer’s later assessment, that Anne “is still held accountable to the system and alone can do little to challenge it,” despite her gleeful, dramatic subversion of the apology (n.p.). In fact, it is Anne who has learned how to take the upper hand, in learning that performing the role of the contrite sinner will get her out of trouble and win affection from the adults involved. Anne has already managed to satisfy Marilla with prayers and an apology simply by performing, so it stands to reason that the performance of a confession, even if she is innocent, will again satisfy. When Marilla suspects that Anne, who proclaims her innocence, has taken and lost Marilla’s treasured amethyst brooch, she declares that Anne will “stay in her room until she confesses,” unable to attend an eagerly-awaited Sunday School picnic (152). Anne, understanding that she must confess in order to attend the picnic, emerges “pale and resolute, with tight shut lips
and gleaming eyes,” and delivers a lyrical confession that ends with the loss of the brooch, which “slipped through my fingers—so—and went down—down—down, all purply-sparkling and sank forevermore beneath the Lake of Shining Waters” (153). As in her prayer, Anne pays close attention to diction and rhythm in order to deliver a lovely oration; the act of confession, as a performative challenge (something Anne enjoys and practices often) takes precedence over the content of the confession (and the truth of the situation). Montgomery notes that Anne delivers her confession “as if repeating a lesson she had learned,” and Anne concludes her apology much as she concludes her first prayer: by stating “that’s the best I can do at confessing, Marilla” (153). Just as with her catechism and prayers, Anne repeats a rote memorization of words without any attention to meaning; she says the words and nothing more. No matter how she truly feels, saying what the adults want her to say will in turn win her what she wants. When Marilla calls her “the very wickedest girl,” Anne agrees “tranquil ly” and asks for her punishment (154). Anne knows both the script and Marilla’s obligation to the script, and she understands the denouement to this scene: she confesses, Marilla gives her a punishment, and they all go on their merry way.

Though in this incident, her plan backfires, as Marilla declares that Anne will not attend the picnic as punishment for losing the brooch, Anne maintains the upper hand in that she learns no lesson from what Marilla intended as an instructional experience. Instead, Marilla learns that her default punishment—restrict Anne’s movements until Anne confesses—will not teach Anne a lesson but only induce her to lie. When Marilla discovers the truth and confronts Anne about her lie, Anne explains what she has learned: “‘Why, you said you’d keep me here until I confessed,’ Anne returned wearily, ‘and so I
decided to confess because I was bound to get to go to the picnic. I thought out a confession last night after I went to bed and made it as interesting as I could. And I said it over and over so that I wouldn’t forget it” (156). Anne goes about preparing her confession exactly as an actor goes about learning lines for a play or a dramaturge scripting a scene and, as with her prayer, focuses on making it “as interesting as [she] could” rather than reflecting on any sincere feelings of remorse. After Marilla catches her in the lie, Anne’s only regret is that “all my trouble was wasted” because Marilla still keeps her from the picnic (156). In the end, Marilla, not Anne, asks for forgiveness, and even confesses to Rachel Lynde that she made a mistake and learned a lesson. Again finding amusement in Anne’s ability to manipulate uncomfortable situations through performance, “Marilla had to laugh in spite of herself. But her conscience pricked her” (156). Rather than punishing Anne and inspiring feelings of contrition in the child, Marilla finds the tables turned. She learns the lesson rather than Anne. But despite Anne’s subversion of Marilla’s didactic efforts for a third time, Marilla somehow maintains faith that Anne will “turn out all right yet,” which plays into a critical element of Montgomery’s double discourse (158). Not only does Anne get away with performing rather than internalizing required behaviors, but Marilla’s affectionate reactions to those behaviors teach young readers that it is better to perform than to accept.

**Audience and Gender: Matthew and Mrs. Rachel’s Gift of Puffed Sleeves**

Mrs. Lynde’s inescapable significance and explicitly female authority provide a strong contrast to the construction of Matthew Cuthbert as the primary adult male presence in Anne’s life.¹⁰ Matthew’s constant support of Anne’s uninhibited imagination,

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¹⁰ Wood calls Matthew “Montgomery’s version of a different kind of man,” and sees him as Montgomery’s subversive concession “to the demands of her culture by inserting a male voice into her
rejection of social norms, and educational ambitions allows Anne far more freedom than either Marilla or Rachel deem appropriate for a girl. And because Rachel and Marilla together provide the firm matriarchy that structures Anne's world and because Matthew represents a separate realm of benevolent patriarchy, Matthew has very few interactions with Mrs. Lynde. The primary episode that unites them is Matthew's quest to provide Anne with the puffed sleeves she covets, and this episode highlights the gendered differences in their approaches to social norms, and consequently, the differences in the audiences they provide for Anne. While Matthew’s approach to providing Anne with puffed sleeves exemplifies his role in her life—that of indulgent benefactor who supports rather than represses her theatricality—Rachel’s approach further impresses upon Anne the need to conform and to fulfill social expectations. Each audience demands and supports different behaviors in Anne based on their understanding of fashion and conformity, and this understanding in turn affects how Anne chooses to perform for each of them.

When Anne's school friends come to Green Gables to practice "The Fairy Queen" for a school concert, Matthew notices that "there was something about her [Anne] different from her mates," and "what worried Matthew was that the difference impressed him as being something that should not exist" (265). In quietly comical bewilderment, Matthew puzzles over what this difference could possibly, “haunted by this question long after the girls had gone” (266). He finally concludes that “Anne was not dressed like the other girls,” that “Anne had never been dressed like the other girls—never since she had

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narrative” (Wood 322). Contending with “a world that only truly legitimizes and authorizes the male voice,” Montgomery designs her “representative of patriarchy to be supportive of progressive gender ideologies” (Wood 322). Wood finds that “Matthew is ultimately less symbolic of traditional, status-quo-enforcing patriarchy (and subsequently less long-lived) than the story’s supposed matriarch—Mrs. Rachel Lynde” (Wood 323).
come to Green Gables,” and, despite his ignorance about fashion, he remains “quite sure that Anne’s sleeves did not look at all the like sleeves the other girls wore” (266).

Individualistic Matthew sees fitting in as a voluntary act that can increase happiness, and he consistently prioritizes Anne’s expressed desires over practicality. For Matthew, giving Anne puffed sleeves means putting Anne on equal footing with her peers because he believes that she deserves the social equality derived from fashionable clothing, and he also knows that Anne herself has long coveted fashionable puffed sleeves.

Thus, Matthew intends to fulfill her desire for fashion rather than a need to conform. Though his first failed attempt to purchase Anne a fashionable dress serves as a gentle mockery of his terror of all things feminine, his second attempt meets with more success due to the approval of Mrs. Lynde. Like Matthew, Mrs. Lynde considers Anne’s happiness, criticizing what she understands as Marilla’s attempt “to cultivate a spirit of humility in Anne by dressing her as she does” and postulating that dressing Anne in ugly, plain dresses is “more likely to cultivate envy and resentment” (270). Yet her initial reaction also indicates a practicality about the necessity—rather than the indulgence—of fitting in. She assures Matthew that she will “make [the dress] up in the very latest fashion” and comments to herself that “[i]t’ll be a real satisfaction to see that poor child wearing something decent for once. The way Marilla dresses her is positively ridiculous” (270). Her characterization of stylish clothing as “decent” and unfashionable clothing as “ridiculous” speaks to a basic assumption that following current fashion trends is more of a necessity than a luxury. (Mrs. Lynde might also apply these same terms to the people dressed accordingly.) Her relief at Matthew’s desire to dress Anne more stylishly indicates her expectation that any respectable parents would want their child to dress as
other children dress and that Marilla’s decision to dress Anne plainly must be a deliberate attempt to teach Anne humility.\textsuperscript{11} Without a didactic reason, no sensible person would ignore the current social trends in dressing a child. For Rachel, giving Anne puffed sleeves means outfitting Anne in the costume that enables conformity.

While only Marilla’s pragmatism about functional clothing motivates her decision to dress Anne plainly, the difference in Matthew and Rachel’s reactions to Anne lack of style is representative of their clearly gendered social worlds, the male individual and the female community. Far from an attempt to force Anne to fit a certain mold, Matthew’s gift of puffed sleeves centers around a desire to give her something she finds pretty in order to make her happy. As an unmarried male with his own land and livestock, a male who lives in a society that protects the male self-sufficiency barred from women, Matthew might rarely need to consider the social advantages of conforming in all things. Though not the richest of men, his resources and status as a man allow him to live his quiet, eccentric, unmarried life. Rachel, however, understands the power of a positive social reputation facilitated by conformity in all ways, including fashion. In addition to the successful performance of gendered social roles, the proper clothing can help acclimate a child to the social group that will serve as her network and support system (or otherwise reject her as an outcast). These gendered differences in perspective affect how each acts as an audience for Anne. Matthew does not notice how Anne’s unconventionality may prove a future disadvantage and has no reason to make Anne feel

\textsuperscript{11} Marilla, somewhat nonconforming in her own right, thinks of clothes never in terms of fashion but in terms of function. She considers puffed sleeves to be an extravagance when a puffed sleeve contains enough fabric for a waist and feels as though she already provided for Anne more than adequately: “Well, I must say I don't think Anne needed any more dresses. I made her three good, warm, serviceable ones this fall, and anything more is sheer extravagance” (272)
judged. Anne can most freely express herself with him because he will not react as negatively to any failures to fulfill social expectations, being himself someone who neither fulfills nor needs to fulfill social expectations. Rachel, aware of the necessity for a woman to conform to the patriarchal gender structure she has internalized, is far more likely to critique Anne’s performances.\(^\text{12}\)

In terms of gendered power dynamics and the reassertion of a patriarchal status quo within the novel, Kate Wood finds it significant that none other than Mrs. Lynde notices and announces Matthew’s death:

[T]his narrative choice is symbolic of the book’s shift, from Matthew’s kind of progressive patriarchy into Mrs. Lynde’s narrower one. Mrs. Lynde’s presence within the text at this precise moment is reflective of the book’s losing battle with patriarchy; her presence reflects a narrative choice precipitated by the cultural ideals that were so pervasive in the news. From the point of Matthew’s death onwards, a reversal occurs in the text, and Anne, up until the moment of Matthew’s death in pursuit of a higher education, takes up her position, with Mrs. Lynde’s full approval, as the self-sacrificing feminine woman of Green Gables (323).

Wood accurately identifies the power dynamic at play between the benevolent patriarchy

\(^{12}\) The women, not the men, in Anne’s life most aggressively reinforce patriarchal norms. Because a woman’s survival in rural, turn-of-the-century patriarchal communities depended much more on complete conformity to social norms, it seems appropriate that women (represented primarily in the form of Mrs. Lynde) would find themselves more invested in training girls to conform to quiet, polite, ladylike behaviors. As the less privileged demographic, their adherence to gendered behavioral norms protected them from social isolation and the threat of destitution. Women in this novel, like in most Canadian communities at this time, depend on a social legitimization to provide them with a social network of respected and established peers and the possibility of a husband to support them in adulthood. Regardless of the possibility of pursuing a teaching career, female financial stability at the turn of the century still largely depended on a male supporter, and a woman’s social reputation defined her chances of finding such a supporter outside her family.
and repressive matriarchy characterized by Matthew and Rachel, and her suggestion that Matthew’s death represents Montgomery’s inability to reject fully her society’s gendered structure is compelling. However, her assumption that Anne at this moment transitions into Mrs. Lynde’s ideal self-sacrificing feminine woman ignores the ways Anne continues to push against the boundaries of a woman’s traditional role. While the book may ultimately lose “the battle with the patriarchy,” Anne (and Montgomery) refuses to go down without a fight. Anne’s choice to stay at Green Gables does not prevent her from continuing her education, an education in subjects traditionally reserved for men.

As Anne prepares to leave Avonlea and move on to Queen’s Academy at the end of the novel, Marilla and Rachel reminisce about her time at Green Gables. Rachel acknowledges that she did not give Anne enough credit and that “[i]t’s nothing short of wonderful how she’s improved these three years, but especially in looks” (Montgomery 325). Rachel’s acceptance of Anne, awareness of her differences from other children and praise of her improvement reflect how Anne has learned to play a role in order to satisfy social expectations and standards of worth. Anne manages to perform the behaviors of womanhood satisfactorily while at the same time maintaining a clear individuality that no longer offends society, as represented by Rachel Lynde, because she mediates it through performance of these conventional behaviors. But while Rachel has come to appreciate

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13 Foster and Simons note that, “[w]hile rejecting the doctrinaire didacticism of much children’s literature, Montgomery herself encountered the constraints of publication which were situated on the ethical orientation of children’s literature: ‘I like doing these [children’s stories] but would like it better if I didn’t have to lug a moral into most of them. They won’t sell without it.’” (Foster and Simons 158). They also argue that [t]he novel’s width of appeal also depends on the two main impulses which inspired it: “Montgomery’s desire to write a story for girls, which, while drawing on earlier examples of the genre, develops away from and challenges them in various respects. . . . . The former dictates a strategy of literary subversion, in which familiar patterns are deconstructed and the main character herself is allowed an iconoclastic role” (Foster and Simons 152). The conventional role into which Anne ultimately falls should not be read as a rejection of her previous challenges to the gender status quo nor an overall reinforcement of such traditional roles.
Anne, she by no means offers unilateral support to this new, mature Anne. Rachel disapproves of Anne’s decision to go to college in the first place and is relieved when it appears as though Anne will have to sacrifice her dream of attending college to care for Marilla. Mrs. Rachel feels as though Anne has had “as much education now as a woman can be comfortable with. I don't believe in girls going to college with the men and cramming their heads full of Latin and Greek and all that nonsense” (392). Unconcerned about Rachel’s opinion, Anne’s declares her intention “to study Latin and Greek just the same…to take my Arts course right here at Green Gables, and study everything that I would at college” (392). Though Montgomery cannot allow Anne to throw off completely the strict gender expectations of her society, she writes Anne a childhood of experimentation with different social roles that models a space of negotiation with social expectations. While Wood acknowledges that Montgomery had little choice in writing a rather conventional ending for her heroine:

   It is clear, upon close examination of the oppressive dominant discourses manifested in the Island newspaper, that Montgomery had little alternative for her novel, culturally and personally. . . . Surrounded by a popular culture that denied itself according to patriarchal notions of female inequality, Montgomery wrote a text that frequently affirmed social conventions and, in so doing, further inscribed them into the discourses of her time (323).

I disagree that Montgomery “further inscribed” these “patriarchal notions of female inequality” into the “discourses of her time.” While unable to wholly throw-off her culture’s patriarchal standards, Montgomery’s work creates small spaces of negotiation and quiet rebellion that provide a foundational model for women to follow in taking small
steps toward a progressive future by challenging the dictates of patriarchal societies.\textsuperscript{14}

Though Anne ultimately settles on a more conventional role of at-home caretaker, her experience of learning how to take up one social role and then put it down for another models a way to carve out a space for agency and authenticity for her young female readers. Anne’s academic ambitions do not end with her choice to care for Marilla, demonstrating that it is possible to fulfill a stereotypically “feminine” role at the same time as pursuing goals that challenge the boundaries of strict gender roles. The performance of conventionality that Anne ultimately chooses still allows the less conventional attributes and priorities that she holds most dear to flourish.

**Conclusion**

As Anne matures, she develops a crucial understanding of how a woman’s life can include layers of identities, different roles performed for different people. The development of a special layer of functional performativity gives her the appearance of social conformity necessary for her survival in a rigid social world. However, these performances remain functional, employed to serve a purpose and then discarded when Anne does not need them to meet certain social pressures. While she learns to heed the

\textsuperscript{14} Like Wood, Webster argues that Anne’s choice to prioritize caring for Marilla over pursuing a prestigious education reflects an internalization of the gendered status quo and reinforces the traditional gender roles of Montgomery’s society:

[Anne’s] new ambitions are to be a good teacher and to save Marilla's eyesight. In other words, she strives to further the well-being of others as her primary aim. This suggests that Anne's first duty is domestic, that intellectual ability is a luxury for women. Because of the organization of gender in Avonlea, Anne may disagree with Mrs. Lynde's assertion that she has "as much education now as a woman can be comfortable with" (305), but she also knows that the final test of her womanhood is to put others' needs before ambition, the private, domestic world before the public, academic world. Earlier she is rewarded for her attempts to be "nice and good" by a home and Diana's friendship, now she is rewarded for ranking home over university by Gilbert's friendship (Webster 2).

Again, Montgomery’s need to write within a certain patriarchal tradition requires her to make certain concessions to traditional gender roles. The way she does this, however, clearly does not undermine the model for challenging patriarchy that she writes into Anne’s childhood experiences.
judging voice of Mrs. Rachel Lynde, and thereby dominant social expectations, she picks and chooses which expectations with which to comply. Anne’s use of performance demonstrates how young women can carve out a space for authenticity and individual identity formation amid the social pressures they must heed to protect their place in society. As Anne grows as a reader and a writer, she learns to employ her staggering imaginative abilities to subvert social expectations, and her performance of this subversion, complete with Marilla’s reinforcing acceptance and warming toward Anne’s dramatic imaginative behavior, shows young female readers that they can do the same without sacrificing acceptance and love.

McQuillan and Pfeiffer see Anne’s maturation into a poised young woman who learns to hold her tongue and make sacrifices in order to care for an aging Marilla as the main work of Montgomery’s plot, which, “whatever its details, describes the impossibility of avoiding the gender regime” (n.p.). Yet to assert that “the details” of Anne’s story do not matter in the novel’s overall message to young readers when situated within an episodic work that ultimately seems to reaffirm a traditional gender structure is to ignore the double discourse required of a female author. Despite Montgomery’s extreme distaste for “the doctrinaire didacticism of much of children’s literature,” she, like Anne, understood the necessity of seeming to fulfill society’s demands in order to quietly work against them (Foster and Simons 158). By offering readers a narrative arc that simultaneously satisfies any readerly anxiety caused by Anne’s unconventional behavior and highlights this behavior as laudable and superior, Montgomery engages in double discourse that allows her to challenge contemporary notions of morality without earning censure. Seemingly reasserting a conventional plot arc and patriarchal social
constraints does not negate the powerful moments in which Montgomery not only challenges the social norms that govern her characters but actively encourages such opposition.
Introduction:
Kathleen Margaret Patchell has united the perspectives of the most central *Anne* critics in her particularly comprehensive investigation of the relationship between the religious elements in *Anne* and *Anne’s* enduring popularity.¹⁵ Patchell posits that *Anne* remains far more widely read and studied today than Nellie McClung’s *Sowing Seeds in Danny*, which initially outsold *Anne*, “partly due to a shift in Canadians’ religious worldview over the twentieth century as church attendance and biblical literacy shift gradually declined” (iv). She believes that Montgomery’s rhetorical strategies “look forward to the twentieth century’s waning of religious faith” and that, “[a]lthough there is enough Christianity in Montgomery’s novel to have made it acceptable to her largely Christian reading public at the beginning of the century, its presentation is subtle enough that it does not disturb or baffle a twenty-first-century reader” (Patchell iv).

However, Patchell does not present this subtle presentation as the result of a synthesis between Christian and non-Christian traditions. Although she emphasizes the significance of “the spiritual complexity and ambiguity that lies behind the authorial voice of *Anne of Green Gables*” and notes that Montgomery’s “complex and contradictory faith perspective is echoed in critics’ varying appraisals of religion in her novel,” Patchell largely limits consideration of this complexity to tensions within a decidedly Christian sphere (Patchell 45, 60). Though Patchell acknowledges that critics have interpreted *Anne’s* spirituality as pagan or pantheistic, she largely dismisses these
arguments in favor of interpreting Anne’s anthropomorphizing flowers and celebration of nature as imaginative, Romantic musings rather than a significant spiritual worldview. Patchell follows the trend common to critics who choose to prioritize one version of spirituality— the Christian or the pagan— rather than considering the complex synthesis I see in the novel.

The critics who focus on a Christian reading of the novel generally examine how Anne challenges the stagnant orthodoxy of Avonlea Presbyterians to iconoclastically reaffirm the Christian faith. Rosemary Ross Johnston notes that “[t]he oppositions and conflicts that occur when . . . orthodoxy is set against spirituality, truth against pretense, and law against love, constitute a significant part of thematic infrastructure; they also of course lie at the core of the Christian message” (qtd. in Patchell 132). Monika Hilder supports a similar reading, arguing that “Montgomery’s exploration of faith is not a rejection of Puritanism but a recovery of the biblical roots of Puritanism, not one of deposal and substitution but of restoration and redemption” (41). Hilder considers Anne a “child-saviour who points the way to God,” whose “childlike faith” is a “map that helps Marilla and the reader out of the maze of legalistic religion” (50). Sorfleet sees Anne’s maturation from a pagan, theologically ignorant child into a Christian adult as a main structuring theme of the novel and suggests that, “in doctrinal terms, she comes to the Father through the Son” after “she reads, learns, and admires the Lord’s Prayer” (179). Patchell herself labels Anne a story “[i]n the tradition of Sunday-School fiction” the type of conversion narrative that features a young orphan who comes to know and accept God, Anne of Green Gables is a story about redemption, the spiritual development of an imaginative orphan girl who grows from a spiritually illiterate child with only an
intellectual knowledge of God, to one who is intuitively drawn by the love of Jesus and the love of her new family and friends to become a growing Christian whose life demonstrates Christian love and self-sacrifice and who in turn positively influences Avonlea people like Marilla” (132). Johnston, Hilder, and Sorfleet, all foreground the Christian elements within the novel and, though Patchell criticizes them for neglecting the “non-Christian elements that reflect both Montgomery’s uncertain faith and the liberal theology of the Presbyterian Church in her day,” she herself uses the work of critics like Gammel, who foreground the pagan elements in Anne, to reaffirm the Christian message she sees in the text (Patchell 132). In a less-partial approach, Foster and Simmons see Anne positioned "between two generic literary poles-- the Evangelical representation of the sinful child who achieves redemption through self-discipline and obedience to Divine teaching, and the Romantic myth of youthful innocence whose entry into the adult world is a process of corruption and disenchantment" (169). I suggest that to ignore one “pole” or the other is to risk missing the true complexity of religious discourse within the novel and undermines a crucial agency I see in Anne’s creative synthesis of the multiple perspectives offered to her.

Choosing religious terminology when analyzing novels like Anne can be difficult, since it is dangerously speculative to diagnose a religious worldview implied but not explicitly labeled in a novel. Because the denizens of Prince Edward Island identify themselves as Presbyterian, we can safely say that their references to Protestantism refer to Presbyterianism specifically, and similarly that the Christianity Anne encounters and learns in Avonlea is of the Presbyterian variety. Discussing the non-Christian, nature-based spirituality that I and other critics see in the novel poses more difficulty. Though I
would tentatively classify Anne’s spiritual inclinations as pantheistic, the plethora of deist, nature-based spiritualities—including pantheism, pandeism, and deism—makes choosing the appropriate term a question of precise semantics. Confidently assigning such a label to the spirituality depicted in *Anne* requires a theological argument beyond the scope of this project. Because the critics who have established the conversation I join by taking on this topic have generally used “pagan” to describe the non-Christian elements of spirituality in Anne, I use that term for simplicity’s sake. But cognizant of the slippage between such labels, I also use the terms “deist” and “pantheistic” loosely to point to how Anne’s understanding of the world presumes the existence of some Creator figure who may not be entirely consistent with the Judeo-Christian God of the Avonlea Presbyterian tradition. These terms also help describe how that worldview emphasizes the spirituality and sentience of nature.

Though nearly every scholar to extensively analyze *Anne* addresses religion at least in passing, the discussion about how Montgomery addresses religion falls flat because of a tendency to prioritize either the Christian, specifically Presbyterian, tradition or the pagan undertones within the novel. Meanwhile, Anne's radical synthesis of Presbyterian and pagan epistemologies goes underexplored as a practical element of *Anne*’s subversive value. Just as she models social performativity for young female readers, Anne also models an agency in worldview creation that demonstrates how young

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16 Pantheism considers the universe to be the totality of nature and divinity and conceives of God as immanent rather than personal or anthropomorphic. Patchell defines “pagan” and “pantheistic” similarly to how I understand them: Paganism is a “religion of spirituality without any reference to an authoritative, revealed revelation. It emphasizes the adoration and appeasement of spirits, and is primarily animistic in context and nature.” The concept of pantheism is contained within modern paganism—pantheism asserts that God is everything and everything is God, and it views all of reality as one” (Patchell 157).
girls can create their own belief systems through interaction with multiple traditions, rather than blindly inheriting a tradition. Though numerous critics, including Shirley Foster, Judy Simmons, Rosemary Ross Johnston, Monika Hilder, and John Sorfleet, address how Anne’s iconoclastic role in the novel brings to light hypocrisies and tensions within the Presbyterian practiced in Avonlea, they fail to recognize the vast significance of Anne's ability to synthesize Presbyterian and pagan practices and beliefs. Rather than depicting a conversion narrative in the didactic tradition of Sunday-School literature, which would require Anne to disavow her previous understanding of spirituality in favor of professing devotion to Christianity, *Anne* presents a synthesis of the pagan and the Christian into the heroine's personal brand of spirituality. Anne challenges the notion that piety always requires dutiful suffering and, though she uses Presbyterian ethics as a model for her own morality, she also finds comfort and spiritual renewal in pagan practices of nature worship. Just as Anne refuses to blindly accept social roles thrust upon her, so does she actively create the belief system that best suits her needs.

Anne’s deist revision of PEI’s standard Presbyterianism evolves out of her love of the “romantic,” a sensibility she creates for herself from a variety of themes she borrows from the Romantic and Victorian literature she loves: the indulgence of excess emotion, the importance of imagination, the spirituality of nature, and the aestheticization of language. Throughout a lonely childhood devoid of emotional support and supervised reading practices, Anne develops a taste for the overwrought, the dramatic, the morbid, the “pathetic,” as she calls it. Anne finds pleasure in sad stories and comfort in poetic language when she suffers disappointments. Whenever she finds herself disappointed, she repeats, “My life is a perfect graveyard of buried hopes,” a sentence she found in a book,
“because it sounds so nice and romantic, just as if I were a heroine in a book, you know. I am so fond of romantic things, and a graveyard full of buried hopes is about as romantic a thing as one can imagine isn't it? I'm rather glad I have one” (83-84). Anne finds that suffering is made more bearable, worthwhile, or noble by being made beautiful. Consequently, Anne finds herself drawn to the poetic, dramatic, and aestheticized elements of religion and the natural rejuvenation of the outdoors far more than traditional practices of Christianity.

Anne needs engagement with nature to fuel her imagination. When she first sees Green Gables, her “beauty-loving eyes lingered on it all, taking everything greedily in; she had looked on so many unlovely places in her life, poor child, but this was as lovely as anything she had ever dreamed” (76). Contemplating nature scenes often sends her into a reverie, as it does at this moment, and “she knelt there, lost to everything but the loveliness around her, until she was startled by a hand on her shoulder” (76). Viewing natural beauty has a transcendent effect on Anne, much like the transporting effects of prayer or meditation, which I shall explore in further detail later in this chapter. Anne’s love of natural beauty ties directly into her need for aestheticization and imagination in her life. Anne’s love of nature and vivid imagination cause her to feel a deep kinship with it and to personify the trees, plants, and animals she encounters. When she makes her first trip across P.E.I. with Matthew Cuthbert, still believing the island is to be her home, she immediately reimagines the landscape into her own imaginative terms, renaming Barry’s Pond the Lake of Shining Waters and the Avenue the White Way of Delight.  

17 These incidents of naming themselves indicate a subversive power in Anne. Berg states, “Coming to Anne after having read Jacques Lacan, I now realize just how important the power to name is. Fatherless (and motherless) Anne takes upon herself the power of the father—signification. Lucy Montgomery obviously never read Lacan, but she instinctively knew the power that comes from naming and she must
the process of making the natural landscape around her part of her own personified
world, she asks Matthew, "What did that tree, leaning out from the bank, all white and
lacy, make you think of?" responding, "Why, a bride, of course—a bride all in white
with a lovely misty veil" when he does not have an answer (Montgomery 53). Anne
continues to interact with Avonlea in a similar vein, even when she learns that Marilla
may return her to the orphanage. After hearing this news, Anne refuses to explore Green
Gables, fearing that "if I go out there and get acquainted with all those trees and flowers
and the orchard and the brook I'll not be able to help loving it. It's hard enough now, so I
won't make it any harder. I want to go out so much—everything seems to be calling to
me, 'Anne, Anne, come out to us. Anne, Anne, we want a playmate'—but it's better not
[to come out to play]" (Montgomery 81). Knowing that she forges emotional bonds with
specific outdoor spaces, Anne cannot bear the pain of separation from a space she has
known only a day. This understanding of the trees, flowers, and brook as potential
playmates further confirms that Anne see humanity everywhere in nature and that
something elemental within her being responds to the "call" of nature. She then turns to
the small bit of nature available to her within the house, she asks for the name of the
potted geranium on the windowsill, not the "apple-scented geranium" type of name that
pragmatic Marilla offers, but "just a name you gave it yourself. Didn't you give it a
name?" (Montgomery 81). Discovering that Marilla has not done so, she asks permission
to name it Bonny for the duration of her stay at Green Gables. She explains that she likes
to give plants names because "[i]t makes them seem more like people. How do you know
but that it hurts a geranium's feelings just to be called a geranium and nothing else? You

have endowed Anne Shirley with that power deliberately. Even as a young naïve reader, I knew that
naming was a powerful act" (Berg 126).
wouldn't like to be called nothing but a woman all the time. Yes, I shall call it Bonny" (Montgomery 81). This attentiveness to the consciousness and potential hurt feelings of potted plants, as well as her instant attachment to the nature at a place she may soon leave, suggests that Anne’s connection with nature runs deeper than providing aesthetic pleasure, constitutes a deeper belief system. In her personifications, Anne imagines every being to be as sensitive as herself. By casting plants and animals as sentient beings with names and stories, Anne suggests that the natural world around her possesses the same kind of life a human does, a life with a soul. This animism implies a sacredness of nature that informs her spirituality. The vivid personification of plants and trees around her creates a community of playmates and peers for her, and her imagination among them resembles Christian worship among a congregation of Christian peers. If imagination is Anne’s form of worship and she consistently undertakes this worship in personified natural settings, nature is what bears witness to her worship the way fellow Christians bear witness to Presbyterian worship. Through this active personification, Anne again reveals her knack for reimagining ideas she receives in a unique, personal way: rather than copying the Romantic approach to nature, which often helps the poet to consolidate and articulate a stable self, Anne projects a multiplicity of selves onto the natural elements of nature through her personification, creating her own form of “Romanticism.”

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18 Anne in fact recognizes her sense of multiple selves, telling Diana, “There's such a lot of different Annes in me. I sometimes think that is why I'm such a troublesome person. If I was just the one Anne it would be ever so much more comfortable, but then it wouldn't be half so interesting” (Montgomery 226). Anne’s version of Romanticism, developed by blending concepts from a variety of Romantic and Victorian poets, prioritizes an indulgence of emotional excesses (particularly glorification of the tragic), aestheticization (particularly of negative emotions and situations), an appreciation of archaism, and a sense of spirituality in nature.
Anne's recurring evaluation of the "scope for imagination" in a particular location indicates the important position imagination holds in her daily life. Before Matthew Cuthbert even meets Anne, he hears from the stationmaster that the little girl waiting for him "preferred to stay outside" as "'[t]here was more scope for imagination,'" rather than "'go into the ladies’ waiting-room'" (Montgomery 50). On the drive home, she makes it clear to Matthew that using her imagination is a necessary part of her daily life:

There is so little scope for imagination in an asylum—only just in the other orphans. It was pretty interesting to imagine things about them— to imagine that perhaps the girl who sat next to you was really the daughter of a belted earl, who had been stolen away from her parents in her infancy by a cruel nurse who died before she could confess. I used to lie awake at night and imagine things like that, because I didn’t have time in the day (53).

Even though her daily activities at the orphanage keep her too busy to imagine, she takes time out of her sleeping hours at night (a traditional time for bedtime prayers in a Christian household) to imagine. Her imaginings themselves tend toward the archaism seen in Romantic poets like Coleridge and Keats, featuring fallen aristocracy, separated loves, and dying young.

Anne’s preference for the beautiful, interesting, and aesthetically pleasing causes her to criticize orthodox depictions of Christ and Christian rituals as mournful, perfunctory, or dull, and she therefore she rejects traditional prayer in favor of a more satisfying contemplation of nature. The tension between her highly imaginative approach to religion and the boring approach she first encounters at the Avonlea Sunday School continues to characterize her relationship with religion throughout the novel. After
arriving with a hat whimsically bedecked with flowers, she finds herself daydreaming out
the window rather than listening to the minister and pronounces the boring and alienating
children’s lesson “horrid” (Montgomery 131). Upon Marilla’s scolding, she protests,
“[B]ut he wasn’t talking to me. . . He was talking to God and he didn’t seem to be very
much interested in it, either. I think he thought God too far off to make it worth while”
(131). In contrast to the distance she notes in the minister’s prayer, Anne finds a
closeness to God in the “row of white birches hanging over the lake” and the way “the
sunshine fell down on them, ‘way, ‘way down, deep into the water” (131). She finds
pleasure in this “beautiful dream” of God’s creation and feels a thrilling, unbidden
gratitude. While the minister’s dull sermon only bores her and drives her away from God,
the scene out her window gives her “a thrill,” and in response she says a heartfelt
“‘Thank you for it, God,’ two or three times” (131). Anne only appreciates standard
Presbyterian prayers for their poetic language, which she rarely understands, and her own
organic prayers retain a simplicity not found in her performative compositions. The
simple, personal, unsupervised repetition of “Thank you for it, God” stands in stark
contrast to the more formal, distant, supervised “Gracious heavenly Father, I thank Thee
for the While Way of Delight and the Lake of Shining Waters and Bonny and the Snow
Queen. . .that's all the blessings I can think of just now to thank Thee for. As for the
things I want, they're so numerous that it would take a great deal of time to name them
all” (99). Anne prays nightly only at Marilla’s command, as her personal desires to pray
in thanksgiving arise impulsively from feelings of extreme excitement or pleasure. Most
of the time, Anne finds prayer difficult in a way that imagination is not. She undertakes
prayer as a chore or exercise and imagination as a pleasure.
Anne’s description of her approach reflects the same simplicity and impulsivity seen in her prayer in church. While Marilla introduces Anne to the Christian tradition of bedtime prayers, Anne tells her, “If I really wanted to pray... I’d go out into a great big field all alone or into the deep, deep woods, and I’d look up into the sky—up—up—up into that lovely blue sky that looks as if there was no end to its blueness. And then I’d just feel a prayer” (99). Despite Anne’s love of performance poetic language, her genuine expressions of faith are artless and thoughtless. Her preferred form of prayer calls for her to surround herself with nature so that she might experience an intuitive, wordless emotional and spiritual connection with the natural world around her. Anne’s worship is all about sensing a connection with the universe, and her wordless prayers require no addressee, and therefore, no God, Christian or otherwise.

**Diana, Goddess of the hunt**

Anne’s desire to pray most often arises in gratitude for her deeply romantic friendship with Diana. After their first meeting, she tells Marilla, “I’m the happiest girl on Prince Edward Island this very moment. I assure you I’ll say my prayers with a right good will to-night” (140). Later, when Mrs. Barry once again allows Diana to associate with Anne after vindictively separating them, Anne declares, “I assure you, Marilla, that I feel like praying to-night and I’m going to think out a special brand-new prayer in honor of the occasion,” (140). Her interest in prayer at these moments is not about cultivating a long-term relationship with God so much as celebrating the joy in her life on these particular nights. I see a distinction between the times Anne utters a prayer, when she expresses genuine gratitude or fear for herself, without prompting, and Prayer, the formal, structured, supervised prayer of the Christian tradition. When Anne speaks to Marilla
about prayer, she seems to be speaking of Prayer, which she approaches as a formal mode of commemoration rather than an expression of personal thoughts and feelings.\textsuperscript{19} Though she recognizes a distinction exists between prayer and poetry when she notes that “[t]his [The Lord’s Prayer] isn’t poetry, but it makes me feel just the same way poetry does,” her valuation of prayer in terms of poetry, as something to be “thought out” in honor of a special occasion, persists (104). She feels compelled to pray when she has reasons to be grateful, but doesn’t feel an intrinsic motivation to pray nightly for the sake of doing so, for the sake of being “good” or “holy.”

Diana’s unique position as Anne’s most frequent source of inspiration to pray speaks to the undercurrent of non-hegemonic spirituality running throughout the text. When Matthew first informs Anne that the Barrys have an eleven-year-old girl, Anne pronounces Diana a “perfectly lovely name” while Matthew notes that he finds it “dreadful heathenish” (Montgomery 62). Anne’s instant interest in Diana’s “heathenish” name signals Anne’s attraction to what scholars like Irene Gammel call paganism early in the novel.\textsuperscript{20} Read by many scholars as queer, Anne’s devotion to Diana and the sites of her play with Diana consistently link her to natural settings and elements of the “pagan.”\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{19} Even when Anne feels a genuine will to pray, inspired by exciting events in her own life, she expresses this will to Marilla with language that reflects her interpretation of formal prayer as an art akin to poetry. There is a performative element here; even though she demonstrates an ability to pray simply and genuinely, Anne emphasizes her understanding of more formal prayer when Marilla is her audience.


\textsuperscript{21} Regarding the homoerotic undertone in Anne’s relationship with Diana, see Laura M. Robinson, “’Big Gay Anne’: Queering Anne of Green Gables and Canadian Culture.” \textit{Canadian Studies: An Introductory Reader}, ed. Wright, Donald, 377-385. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 2004. Diana’s later marriage to Fred and Anne’s subsequent disappointment, in addition to the implication that Anne carries romantic feelings for Diana, further suggest Anne’s stronger devotion to the ideals evoked by Diana’s name, here, sworn virginity. See also Gavin White, “Falling out of the Haystack: L. M. Montgomery and Lesbian Desire.” \textit{Canadian Children's Literature/Littérature Canadienne pour la Jeunesse} 102.27 (2001 Summer): 43-59.
Anne and Diana’s first meeting occurs in an appropriate setting for the namesake of a goddess associated with sacred woods and a young nature venerator—the Barrys’ resplendent garden, filled with more than fifteen plants vividly described and mentioned specifically by name. While the adults socialize inside, “[o]utside in the garden, which was full of mellow sunset light streaming through the dark old firs to the west of it, stood Anne and Diana, gazing bashfully at each other over a gorgeous clump of tiger lilies” (138). Gammel notes, “In this polymorphous courtship scene, Montgomery’s rhetoric is one of sheer excess, a wild cataloging of flowers coupled with purple prose, disturbing the painterly balance, deconstructing the garden as a cultured space of delineated boundaries and opening it as a multi-sensuous nature landscape” (Gammel 238). Amid a demure household, strictly overseen by Mrs. Barry, this beautiful outdoor space, “where sunshine lingered and bees hummed, and winds, beguiled into loitering, purred and rustled” creates a separate space that defies the order and structure of Avonlea society (138). Amid this excessive, unrestrained, Romantic landscape, Anne meets the girl for whom she will feel the most intense devotion and love out of any other character in the novel. Anne immediately pledges herself to Diana forever, a pledge that has both social and spiritual significance. On the surface, it initiates a meaningful relationship that provides Anne with a variety of growing experiences, but on a subversive level, it further connects Anne to the mysticism of nature and reflects Anne’s devotion to an alternative system of spirituality.

Although her name evokes nature and a pre-Christian pantheon, Diana remains a

MLA Bibliography. 31 Mar, 2014. Web. Regarding Anne and Diana’s “pagan” sites of play, see Gammel (238).

22 This “multi-sensuous nature landscape” reflects the Romantic era preference for a naturalized landscape rather than a formal garden.
fairly conventional, obedient Christian child, leaving the flights of fancy and nature-based spirituality to Anne. Anne, not Diana, insists that the two pledge a vow to remain friends “for ever and ever,” “[a]s long as the sun and moon shall endure,” and that such a vow “ought to be [made] over running water” (140). While Diana protests that “it’s dreadfully wicked to swear” and insists that she “never heard of but one kind” of swearing, Anne insists that “there really is another. Oh, it isn’t wicked at all. It just means vowing and promising solemnly,” which Anne describes as “my kind of swearing” (140). Just as Anne renames Avonlea landmarks to suit her fancy, Anne authoritatively redefines “swearing” and takes ownership over this definition, choosing to align it with goodness and faithfulness rather than wickedness. Anne imagines the running water over which they take their vow, and proceeds to take imaginative charge on all their ensuing escapades. Diana’s conventionality, coupled with Anne’s extreme devotion to her, only serves to enhance Anne’s “pagan” nature as Diana’s relative lack of imagination and wildness set Anne’s pagan instincts into high relief. Anne devotion to Diana throughout the novel, as well as recurring moonlight and wild deer imagery, emphasizes the connection between Anne and the pagan goddess, between Anne and pagan spirituality. As the virgin goddess of the hunt, woodland creatures, childbirth, and women, Diana represents a variety of domains integral to Anne’s imagination and worship. Anne often drifts off to find solitude in wooded areas, from the trees near her school to Idlewild to Lover’s Lane to the sublimely terrifying Haunted Wood. Indeed, Anne seems to align with the attributes implied by the name Diana more than Diana Barry herself.

Anne depicts her relationship with Diana as intense and emotionally charged, often through the use of dramatic language that often echoes the language of romantic
relationships. When Mrs. Barry separates the girls after Anne accidentally intoxicates Diana at an unsupervised tea party, Anne feels as though her life is over. After learning that Mrs. Barry will never permit her to speak to Diana again, Anne appears to be “tragedy personified” and confesses to Marilla, “I don't believe I'll live very long” without Diana’s friendship (193). When allowed to say a brief goodbye to Diana, she bids “eternal farewell” to her “friend of youth” and, after both girls pledge their love to one another, Anne describes Diana’s love as “a ray of light which will forever shine on the darkness of a path severed from thee” (Montgomery 192). She claims that “[i]n the years to come thy memory will shine like a star over my lonely life, as that last story we read together says” and that her “heart will ever be faithful to thee" (Montgomery 192). Ever conscious of how poetic archaisms comfort her, Anne makes no secret of how she intentionally created “such an affecting farewell down by the spring. It will be sacred in my memory forever. I used the most pathetic language I could think of,” including ‘thou’ and ‘thee,’ which “sound so much more romantic than 'you’” (193). She even goes so far as to ask Diana for a lock of hair to remember her by, which Anne vows to wear in a bag around her neck for the rest of her life.  

As a result of her parting with Diana, Anne throws herself into her studies, for at least in school Anne can “look at [Diana] and muse over days departed" (193). Having her friend “ruthlessly torn” from her inspires Anne to take up the academic pursuits in which she becomes exemplary.  

Anne’s intense friendship with Diana highlights Anne’s personal form of romanticism and emphasizes Anne’s deep connection to a pagan goddess and pagan practices.

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23 However, the girls do not exchange locks of hair; Diana doesn’t take one from Anne. Beyond the basic logic that Anne is the far more fanciful and dramatic of the two, this detail possibly casts Anne as the pining male lover.

24 This adds to the potentially gendered dynamic between Anne and Diana; the feverish devotion to a craft inspired by the loss of a loved one is a common trope in the origin stories of male heroes.
Anne and Church

Anne’s criticism of the minister arises from the liturgical preferences Montgomery developed in her own experiences of Scottish Presbyterianism. Mary Henley Rubio explains that, in the Scottish-Presbyterian tradition, “sermons were not to be read, as was the custom in England; they were to be delivered extemporaneously. A good sermon was a persuasive sermon, one designed to persuade hearers to be good. To achieve this, ministers had to be interesting, show both ‘gravity and warmth,’ and be free of abstruse ‘doctrinal discourse’” (330). This norm suggests that, for Scottish- Presbyterians, imagination is necessary for goodness. If a sermon must be interesting to be good and to persuade listeners to follow a righteous path, the lack of an imagination in a minister could prevent his congregation from living a good, Christian life. Without imagination, there would be no inspiration. The importance of imagination in a religious context gives Anne the potential to live a pious life by inspiring herself with her own imagination. Rubio notes that “Montgomery often expresses the opinion in her books and journals that dullness is a cardinal sin. . . . In many cases, she takes aim at those whose practice of religion misses its spirit” (330). By this logic, Anne, who often expresses shockingly impious sentiments, practices a form of Presbyterianism that remains truer to the spirit of the religion than people who profess to be deeply Presbyterian by virtue of their adherence to dogma rather than demonstrating the goodness they profess outside the church.25

Anne’s imagination allows her to deeply identify with the children in the illustration of the Lord’s Prayer card that Marilla gives her to study, despite the fact that

25 For example, Anne’s novel-long effort to love the class bully, Josie Pye, emphasizes the hypocrisy of Mrs. Barry’s refusal to forgive Anne for accidentally intoxicating Diana.
the children have no story or character, appearing simply as decoration for the standard prayer. However, by speculating about the life of a particular little girl, “standing off by herself in the corner as if she didn’t belong to anybody,” like Anne herself, Anne connects with the type of religious feelings that Sunday Schools intend to cultivate in children. By empathizing with a girl Anne interprets as alone and orphaned, a girl she imagines as desiring Christ’s blessing (but fearing the attention of the other children at his feet) and as feeling trepidation at approaching Christ, Anne accesses these feelings for herself, discovering a consuming desire to be acknowledged and blessed by Christ.

Though she attributes this desire to the little girl, her ability even to conceive of this desire for intimacy with God allows her to comprehend the type of desire fundamental to a deeply Christian life, a desire that an imaginative, persuasive minister strives to inspire in a congregation. Anne connects these imagined feelings to her own experience, suggesting to Marilla that the little girl’s “heart must have beat and her hands must have got cold, like mine did when I asked you if I could stay” (104). Anne projects her own fear of abandonment and rejection, yet confidently assumes “[b]ut it’s likely He did [feared rejection] don’t you think?” (104). This confidence in the love Christ must have for lonely, frightened children who desire his love reflects Anne’s deep, if unconscious, understanding of Christ’s nature in the Christian tradition. In imagining that “such a thrill of joy” would have run over the little girl, Anne draws a verbal connection between the spiritual thrill of a relationship with Christ and the “crinkly feeling up and down your back” when she reads poems that are “just full of thrills,” like “The Downfall of Poland,” “The Battle of Hohenlinden,” “Bingen on the Rhine,” and “The Lady of the Lake” (104, 88). The state in which Marilla finds her imagining this scene strongly
resembles a state of deep communion with the spiritual world; Anne is “motionless . . . with her arms clasped behind her, her face uplifted, and her eyes astar with dreams,” a “rapt little figure with a half-unearthly radiance” (Montgomery 104). The act of imagining transports Anne to some “unearthly” realm, and her “rapt” focus on the scene speaks to the full commitment of Anne’s contemplation.

The language of transcendence, specific posture, and the rapt “radiance” achieved through this imaginative exercise resembles the effects of prayer in many religious traditions. Yet to Marilla, Anne’s reaction is impious: Marilla does not believe in imagining herself into situations that God did not create for her in reality. When Marilla scolds Anne for being “too familiar” in her depiction of Jesus with the children, Anne protests, “Why, I felt just as reverent as could be. I’m sure I didn’t mean to be irreverent” (105). Though Marilla prefers a more traditional approach to worship, imagination is the contemplative practice that brings Anne nearer to the divine. Formal prayer and Sunday School classes lack the vivid intimacy that Anne can feel with the figure of Christ when left to her own imaginative contemplation. Her empathy with characters given life by her own imagination represents a wholesome, organic understanding of the joy of Christ’s love and the spirit of the Christian life.

Anne finds her imagining a far more fulfilling and beautiful experience of the Lord’s Prayer than it was in church, when her minister said it “so mournfully,” just as the illustrator of the prayer card had “painted Him so sorrowful-looking” (104, 131). Both her previous minister and the minister she meets in Avonlea pray in such a mournful or disinterested way that she believes they “thought praying was a disagreeable duty” (104). However, when she experiences the prayer through her own imagination, she finds that
the prayer “is just like a line of music” (104). Just as poetry is an art form that Anne finds similar to but more accessible than prayer, music satisfies her need for artistic beauty paired with spirituality. In a similar vein, Anne questions the minister’s choice of “a very long text,” noting, “[i]f I was a minister I'd pick the short, snappy ones. The sermon was awfully long, too. I suppose the minister had to match it to the text. I didn't think he was a bit interesting. The trouble with him seems to be that he hasn't enough imagination” (131). As a child, Anne intuitively recognizes the value of the Scottish-Presbyterian ideal of lively, interesting sermons. When she cannot recite a “paraphrase” like her Sunday School classmates, she offers instead a recitation of Lydia Sigourney’s “The Dog at His Master's Grave.” While she admits that the poem is “not really truly religious piece of poetry,” she considers it “so sad and melancholy that it might as well be” (132). Rife with Romantic imagery, the poem depicts a loyal dog refusing to stir from his former master’s grave, even “when a storm drew nigh, / And the clouds were dark and fleet” until “autumn nights were bleak; / Till his eye grew dim with his hope's decay, / And he pined, and pined, and wasted away, / A skeleton gaunt and weak” (Sigourney 53-55). Until now, Anne’s experience of organized religion has taught her that religious texts are sad and mournful, but she finds herself newly excited by the nineteenth paraphrase for the following week, which she does not understand but cannot wait to recite because “it sounds SO [sic] tragical” (Montgomery 132). This kind of gloom and tragedy interests her because, unlike the tedious mournfulness of uninspiring sermons, this paraphrase is actively, poetically, dramatically “tragical,” far more appealing to Anne’s Romantic sensibilities.

Anne often creates similar equivalences between elements of Presbyterianism and
activities that hold more interest for her. When trying to convince Marilla to let her go to the Debating club concert with Diana and her cousins, she describes Prissy Andrews’s selection, ‘Curfew Must Not Ring To-Night,” as a “moral piece” that would do her good to hear, further arguing that the choir will “sing four lovely pathetic songs that are pretty near as good as hymns” and that since the minister will deliver an address, which is essentially the same a sermon, the entire evening has religious value (213). When Ms. Stacy catches Anne reading in school and chastises her for reading a novel instead of her history textbook, Anne asks, “how can you call Ben-Hur a novel when it’s really such a religious book?” (317). Yet she herself admits that she is not reading for the religion, but rather for the thrilling chariot race, which even she deems “a little too exciting to be proper reading for Sunday, and I only read it on week-days” (317). Anne tries to set herself on the right path by seeking Mrs. Stacy’s approval of sufficiently wholesome reading material and by respecting Sundays as holier than weekdays, but Anne’s religious tastes are frequently tempered by her secular, aesthetic tastes in art.

“Some people are naturally good” The Burden of Red Hair

As Margaret Anne Doody notes, Anne’s red hair visibly connects her to her Scottish roots and the “mythical Celtic landscape,” evoking the idea of the magical “changeling of Celtic lore” (421). Juliet MacMaster agrees, asserting that Anne’s red hair gives her a sort of “mythopoetic power” (402). Through a pagan lens, Anne’s red hair serves as a sign of her powerful (possibly druid-like) Otherness within Avonlea, but Anne conceives of her red hair as a major flaw and a barrier between her and goodness. Highly aware of “the conventions of popular culture of her day, both oral and literary,” due in part to her reading of Sir Walter Scott, Anne understands that a woman’s hair color has a serious impact on her moral fiber.
and role in the world (MacMaster 403). Scott played a large part in solidifying the fair-versus-dark trope in popular culture, and John Caspar Lavatory, who wrote “immensely influential essays on physiognomy of the late eighteenth century... claimed some scientific authority for moral judgments based on physical appearance. He associated tenderness and weakness with flaxen hair, the opposite with dark” (MacMaster 402). Recognizing that red hair not only stands out but marks her as a troublemaker, Anne always casts either stunningly blonde or “ravishingly” black-haired heroines in her short stories. As MacMaster notes, “Anne identifies with both her blonde and her dark heroines, Geraldine and Cordelia— both names she covets for herself,” yet Anne’s preference for hair “a glorious black, black as the raven's wing” speaks to her desire for agency, preferring the beauty associated with strength and subversiveness over the pure, innocent blond (MacMaster 405, Montgomery 57).26 Beyond the fair-dark dichotomy, MacMaster notes that “if literary precedent suggests that you can’t be beautiful with red hair, it also determines that you can’t be good. Long tradition declares that the devil and Judas both have red hair. Novels provide a string of red-haired villains” (406). Anne recognizes these cultural conceptions that accompany red hair and translates them into unattractiveness and inherent wickedness. Her red hair comes with both Christian and secular implications, and she hates it for what it represents in both realms— wickedness in the Christian realm and ugliness in the secular. Strangely enough, Anne’s loathing for her red hair unites her attention to pagan traditions and secular standards with her attention to Christian standards as much as her more positive interests (such as her interest in beautiful, poetic language) unite the two realms.

Anne feels personally barred from goodness by God himself; after all, if God gave her

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26 In her most detailed story about (brunette) Geraldine and (blonde) Cordelia, Geraldine pushes Cordelia to her death out of jealousy of Cordelia’s love with the perfect love interest, Bertram. Anne chooses to identify with the wicked, active character than the pure, passive character.
red hair, he must have wanted her to be bad. Even before beginning an ecclesiastical education, Anne has already developed a sense of predestination about her hair based on the emotional abuse she faces in her various foster homes. Anne tells Marilla, “Mrs. Thomas often told me I was desperately wicked,” and Mrs. Thomas sets Anne against God entirely by telling her “that God made [her] hair red on purpose, and I’ve never cared about Him since” (98). Anne sees her red hair as both restriction and justification, explaining to Marilla, “You’d find it easier to be bad than good if you had red hair... People who haven’t red hair don’t know what trouble is” (98). Anne feels as though her hair prevents her from being either “divinely beautiful” or “angelically good”: her former foster mother Mrs. Spencer leads Anne to believe most of what she says is wicked, despite the fact that she doesn’t “mean to be wicked. It’s so easy to be wicked without knowing it, isn’t it?” (53). Anne's red hair strikes her as something so egregiously loathsome she cannot even imagine it away. Though she considers pink "the most bewitching color in the world, she "can't wear it. Redheaded people can't wear pink, not even in imagination" (83). The hope that her hair might one day "darken to a real handsome auburn," as Mrs. Lynde suggests, sustains her, and she feels "[i]t would be so much easier to be good if one's hair was a handsome auburn" rather than the "terrible red" that Mrs. Lynde initially mocks (123).

Anne recognizes her insecurity over her hair as her primary fault, though this self-awareness does not render her immune to teasing. Anne's two main bursts of temper arise from Gilbert and Rachel unfavorably comparing her hair to carrots, and she admits she is "so tired of being twitted about my hair and it just makes me boil right over” (125). Since red hair proves such an impediment to Anne, preventing her from being both a minister’s wife and a foreign missionary, she finally attempts to dye her hair black. Aware that dying her hair
is “wicked,” Anne decides it would be “worth the cost” to change her sense of pre-determined wickedness—and that she would make up for the sin with extra goodness elsewhere (288). After hearing from Mrs. Spencer, Mrs. Thomas, and Mrs. Lynde that she is “full of original sin” and that “no matter how hard I try to be good I can never make such a success of it as those who are naturally good,” Anne refuses to accept being “bad” forever and takes matters into her own hands, making a choice she thinks will allow her to be a better person (288).

After the dye turns Anne’s hair green rather than black, Anne chooses the side of goodness in the contest between goodness and beauty, vowing “to devote all [her] energies to being good after this,” and that she “shall never try to be beautiful again. Of course it’s better to be good. I know it is, but it’s sometimes so hard to believe a thing even when you know it” (292). Despite her faith in her own inability to be good, Anne does not stop trying to be good for the sake of the Cuthberts and the Allans, so she might “grow up to be a credit” to the adults she respects and loves (292).

“I really think I’d like to be a minister’s wife when I grow up”: Anne’s friendship with Mrs. Allan

Anne’s relationship with Christianity changes when a new minister and his wife, a young, pleasant-faced couple, still on their honeymoon, and full of all good and beautiful enthusiasms for their chosen lifework” come to town (236). Upon meeting “the bright, gentle little lady” whom she deems “another kindred spirit,” “Anne fell promptly and wholeheartedly in love” (236). In addition to Anne’s love of natural beauty, she has a weakness for conventional beauty and conventional style. She chafes against the restrictive boredom of Avonlea religion until she meets an aesthetically appealing and
charismatic example of Christian living in the form of Mrs. Allan. Mrs. Allan dresses stylishly, in the type of gowns Anne covets, such as “the sweetest dress of pale-pink organdy, with dozens of frills and elbow sleeves” and has the type of ethereal “seraph”-like beauty that Anne desires for herself (248). As the new Sunday School teacher, Mrs. Allan encourages Anne to ask questions, unlike the previous teacher, and she strikes up a particularly intimate relationship with Anne, often inviting her up to the Allan manse for tea. The cheerful and attractive image of Christianity that Mrs. Allan presents inspires Anne to declare that she is “trying to be as much like Mrs. Allan as I possibly can, for I think she's perfect” and that she would like to also be a minister’s wife someday (248).

Anne considers Mrs. Allan to be “one of the naturally good people,” someone “you can love right off without any trouble” (248). Upon her their first meeting in Sunday School, Anne pronounces Mrs. Allan “perfectly lovely” and decides she would “like to be a Christian if I could be one like her” because (237). Before meeting Mrs. Allan, Anne “always thought [religion] was kind of melancholy, but Mrs. Allan's isn’t,” and Mrs. Allan’s idea that one “ought always to try to influence other people for good” sticks with Anne as a primary goal in life (237). As Patchell states, “instead of the gloom and boredom that Anne initially associated with Christianity, Mrs. Allan connects art, beauty and joyfulness with the Protestant faith” and serves as “the merry voice of love and compassion” in Anne’s life (155).

Anne observes that “[i]t's as good as an extra conscience to have a minister's wife for your friend,” since “[i]t’s always wrong to do anything you can't tell the minister's wife,” and she wants to be able to tell Mrs. Allan everything (309). When Anne attends the fair with Diana and sees a horse race, she “refused to bet [with Diana], because I wanted to tell Mrs.
Allan all about everything, and I felt sure it wouldn't do to tell her that” (309). In taking Mrs. Allan as a role model, Anne thus models her own behavior on a paragon of Christian ethics. As her relationship with Mrs. Allan develops, she remains constantly aware that Mrs. Allan is a minister’s wife and considers this seriously as a possible future for herself. Mrs. Allan’s perspective and advice become one of the main guiding forces in Anne’s life, and Anne chooses teaching, a career she pursues with zeal, prompted by Mrs. Allan’s suggestion that “everyone should have a purpose in life” (319). By the summer Anne is fourteen, “pleasant Saturday afternoon at the manse with Mrs. Allan” become a part of Anne's weekly routine, and she specifically sets aside time on Sunday afternoons to consider her sinful behavior and how she might “be good” and “do just what would please [Marilla, Mrs. Allan, and her teacher, Miss Stacy] and what [they] would approve of” (Montgomery 322, 328-329).

Choosing to schedule time with her religious mentor and time for self-reflection on her adherence to the behavioral standards of the actively Presbyterian women in her life into each week, demonstrates Anne’s commitment to cultivating a Christian morality in herself.

Anne’s commitment to being “good,” synonymous with “a good Christian” after she meets Mrs. Allan, leads her to a new relationship with prayer. While before Anne often requires coaxing to pray in the traditional Christian sense and only feels a sincerity of prayer when inspired by natural beauty or the happiness of friendship, she develops more of an instinct to talk to God in times of trouble as well as delight. When she finds herself sinking in the rowboat while playing Lady Elaine, Anne immediately turns to God. She later tells Mrs. Allan she “was horribly frightened. . . . I prayed, Mrs. Allan, most earnestly, but I didn’t shut

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27 Patchell notes that Anne’s regular self-reflection aligns with “the Presbyterian emphasis on self-examination,” which falls into one of the three stages of Christian growth as described in the Shorter Catechism of the Presbyterian Church: sanctification, or “the path Anne follows to become more like the image of God (140). Patchell sees Anne’s participation in this process as something that connects her to heroines of Sunday-School fiction.
my eyes to pray, for I knew the only way God could save me was to let the flat float close enough to one of the bridge piles for me to climb up on it” (297). Anne repeats this same request “over and over again,” since “[u]nder such circumstances you don’t think much about making a flowery prayer” (275). Just as she once repeated the same, simple “Thank you for it, God” prayer in heartfelt thanks for the beauty of the island around her, in contrast with the “flowery” prayer she first performs for Marilla, so does Anne now pray with simplicity and urgency. In this anecdote, she demonstrates faith that God will save her, as well as certainty that he exists and listens to her prayers. While Anne indicates little interest in learning how to speak to God when she first arrives at Green Gables, her friendship with Mrs. Allan leads her to develop a personal, more explicitly Christian relationship with God.

After becoming close with Mrs. Allan, Anne also chooses to regularly say her prayers without coaxing from Marilla. When Marilla will not allow her to accompany her friend Jane to a concert in a nearby town, Anne confesses to Diana that she “felt so heart-broken that I wouldn’t say my prayers when I went to bed. But I repented of that and got up in the middle of the night and said them” (305). Nightly prayers have become part of Anne’s routine, and she feels guilty when she skips them, even with no one to know and criticize her.

**Incomplete Conversion**

Despite Anne's commitment to Christian morality and her close relationship with Mrs. Allan, Anne's Christian faith does not supplant her devotion to nature and her association with the pagan elements that previously defined her spirituality. Elizabeth Epperly marks a major narrative shift in Chapter XXXI, "Where the Brook and River Meet,” when Anne, now fifteen, noticeably begins to curb her speech regularly, and Marilla asks why.28 Epperly sees

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28 Numerous critics use this chapter’s title, which appears in Wordsworth’s poem, “Maidenhood,” in support of arguments that Anne represents the ideal Romantic child.
Anne's response to Marilla as a sign of Anne's maturation and descent into the mold of a conventional heroine, which "suggests her tentative leanings towards the stereotypical image of womanhood that favors reserve, tolerance, self-sacrifice, domesticity, and dreamy-eyed abstraction" (357-358). Epperly notes that this episode coincides with "the end of the child's most spontaneous and whimsical speeches, and suggests a new conformity and consciousness of restraint," and I see this turning point in Anne’s childhood as a benchmark for evaluating the extent of her journey “from pagan to Christian,” as John Sorfleet describes it (354).

Even after passing her entrance examinations for Queen's Academy, completing the teaching certification program, and returning to Avonlea as a young woman, Anne remains strongly connected to nature and her youthful flights of fancy.29 Her close friendship with Mrs. Allan and her devotion to Christian ideals thrives alongside the sense of spirituality that Anne feels in nature. Though Anne demonstrates her commitment to Christianity through her regular church attendance, prayer, and consultation with the minister’s wife, she never disavows her previous sensibilities, creating her own personal brand of spirituality. Indeed, Anne continues to seek solace and refreshment in nature, often personifying it and addressing it as if it were a deity. Any interpretation of the novel as a conversion narrative or an instantiation of Sunday-School fiction ignores Anne’s deep, persistent connection to nature mysticism.

Rather than supplanting the Christian God with a pagan deity or a wholly pantheistic faith system, Anne positions the God of her Presbyterian Sunday School within a vibrantly spiritualized Nature. Even as she becomes a true Christian, nature continues to serve as a source of rejuvenation and centeredness for the newly-mature Anne. Throughout the

29 Berg sees Anne’s academic ambition as a more masculinized quality that contributes to her fluidity between the dialectical poles of the male world and the female world.
agonizingly tense wait for the Queen's entrance examination results, during which Anne and her friends take to "haunting" the post office for the Charlottetown daily newspaper that would publish their scores, only nature's beauty can distract Anne from her nerves. "[S]itting at her open window, for the time forgetful of the woes of examinations and the cares of the world," Anne "drank in the beauty of the summer dusk, sweet-scented with flower-breaths from the garden below and sibilant and rustling from the stir of poplars" (341). The words "drank" and "flower-breaths" evoke a combined sense of Christian and pagan spirituality, as Anne imbibes "the beauty of the summer dusk" as though it were Communion wine while taking in resuscitating "flower-breaths." The scene outside her window, unique in its power to distract her from the wait for exam results, revives Anne and gives her new life. Nature serves as her Eucharist, her life-giving spiritual food and drink. Yet, the same paragraph also establishes that Anne still believes in spiritual forces distinct from a Christian God, when she observes that the "eastern sky above the firs was flushed faintly pink from the reflection of the west" and wonders "if the spirit of color looked like that" (341). She assumes without question the existence of a “spirit of color” and seriously considers a potential visual manifestation of its presence. Regardless of Anne's public identification as a Protestant and her having learned to pray nightly, she clearly does not think of the world purely in the terms of doctrinal Presbyterianism.

When Anne discovers that she passed her examinations first out of all the students from P.E.I., she again demonstrates a smooth blending of Christian and pagan instincts. She "wound up a delightful evening by a serious little talk with Mrs. Allan at the manse," connecting with her Christian mentor, then "knelt sweetly by her open window in a great sheen of moonshine and murmured a prayer of gratitude and aspiration that came straight
from the heart" (343). Despite praying regularly as an adult, Anne has not outgrown her tendency to pray "straight from the heart" in times of particularly high emotion and to find such emotions piqued by the presence of moonlight. The "great sheen of moonshine" that lights her prayer reaffirms Anne's spiritual connections to Diana, virgin goddess of the moon. Her prayer expresses "thankfulness for the past and reverent petition for the future; and when she slept on her white pillow her dreams were as fair and bright and beautiful as maidenhood might desire" (343). Unlike her childhood prayers, which she often addressed to God and recited aloud, Anne's mature prayers do not appear verbatim in the text and therefore do not explicitly address a Christian God. After Anne begins to habitually hold her tongue around others, readers lose the knowledge of Anne’s interior thoughts. Instead, our understanding of Anne’s thoughts comes filtered through the narrator, and we are restricted from her interiority in a new way. Just as Anne’s interiority is shut to us, so is it shut to Avonlea, and her silence means that we, as well as the folk of Avonlea, cannot criticize older Anne’s thoughts and beliefs so easily as younger Anne’s. Within a distinctly gendered and regulated society, a woman’s subversion and resistance must often happen in the private silence of her own mind. Because we are no longer privy to her thoughts, Anne could be praying to nature, a pagan deity, a personal conception of God, or a personification of nature just as easily as the traditional Christian God. Her prayers are not coded as explicitly Christian, which reveals an ambiguity on Montgomery’s part. Were Anne’s process of maturation meant to serve as a conversion narrative, the narrator would emphasize the Christian nature of her prayer. While an instinct to pray in moments of high emotion hardly distinguishes Anne from serious Christians, the scene's emphasis on moonlight, whiteness, purity, and maidenhood--without any signposts of Christianity-- evokes an image of a pagan maiden's supplication to Diana as
easily as it does a young woman's worship of God. Keeping in mind Rubio's concept of the subtle "double discourse" within *Anne*, the lack of Christian indicators in this scene speaks as strongly as their presence elsewhere.

As Anne prepares to recite at a concert in White Sands, taking on the adult role of performer rather than her childhood role of spectator, she continues to reaffirm her ties to the natural world and a pagan spirituality. Just as young Anne found wildflowers a fitting adornment for a church hat, Diana notes that older Anne looks better in the organdy dress that "seems as if it grew" on her organically than she does in her more conventionally fashionable muslin gown (343). Anne also expresses a spiritual love for her Green Gables bedroom, telling Diana that she is "so glad my window looks east into the sun-rising" because "[i]t's so splendid to see the morning coming up over those sharp fir tops. It's new every morning, and I feel as if I washed my very soul in that bath of earliest sunshine" (350). Here Anne applies the language of baptism to nature, again blurring the distinctions between the pagan and the Christian and avoiding explicit reference to Christianity. While Anne takes ethics and certain aspirations of character from a Christian tradition, she finds spiritual fulfillment and cleansing almost exclusively in nature. Just as when she first came to Avonlea, Anne uses Christian language to aesthetic and poetic effect more often than she dwells on the formal practices as delineated in the catechism.

Older Anne still indulges in the excess of tragic emotion that characterizes her favorite literature, describing her selection for the concert, "The Maiden's Vow," as "so pathetic" because she would "rather make people cry than laugh" (351). At the concert, Anne's

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30 Which poem Montgomery meant to reference remains unclear. Of at least three possible candidates (one an air set to “Coming Thro the Rye” and one by Caroline Oliphant, the Baroness Naire), the most likely is “The Maiden’s Vow, or, Mars La Tour,” an overwrought tale of a woman pledging her undying love and faithfulness to her dying lover. But Anne mentions several incidents in which adults like the Allans or Miss
"spiritual face" and Titian hair draw attention from the audience, and, after a paralyzing moment of stage fright, Anne delivers a well-received recitation (353). Heady from the excitement, Anne seeks refreshment from the tension of the evening in the "calm white moonshine radiance," feeling that “it was good to be out again in the purity and silence of the night! How great and still and wonderful everything was, with the murmur of the sea sounding through it and the darkling cliffs beyond like grim giants guarding enchanted coasts” (355) (emphasis mine). Anne never loses her sense of awe at nature’s majesty or her need for solace in nature. As she and her friends leave the concert, gossiping about the wealth of their higher-class audience, Anne declares, “We are rich. . . why, we have sixteen years to our credit, and we're happy as queens, and we've all got imaginations more or less. Look at that sea, girls-- all silver and shadow and vision of things not seen. We couldn't enjoy its loveliness any more if we had millions of dollars and ropes of diamonds” (356). Anne rarely thanks God or alludes to him as the source of her success or fortune. Far more often she invokes nature and her imagination as reason for gratitude, relegating Christianity to an aesthetic function by peppering her speech with obscure Biblical allusions that are rarely explicit as such. Her allusions always resemble the poetry she first found most appealing about Christian prayers and hymns, and her allusion in this moment to Hebrews 11:1, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," could easily pass for a secular poetic allusion. Years after learning to pray according to Marilla’s Presbyterian expectations, older Anne still finds herself drawn to the affective poetry of Christian worship rather than formal practices.

Higher education does nothing to change Anne’s love of nature and comfort in

Josephine Barry laugh when she meant to be serious or wrote a pathetic story designed to cause sorrow: “Miss Barry generally laughed at anything I said, even when I said the most solemn things. I don't think I liked it, Marilla, because I wasn't trying to be funny” (Montgomery 310).
excessive emotion, even though she must choose between the indoor world of academia and the outdoor world of boundless nature during the school year. When she moves on to Queen's, Anne finds her loneliness exacerbated by her lack of access to nature. She misses Green Gables and "the pleasant consciousness of a great, green, still outdoors, of sweet-peas growing in the garden, and moonlight falling on the orchard" (362). Again, she finds a strange comfort in her own sorrow, claiming, "I can't cheer up-- I don't want to cheer up. It's nicer to be miserable" (363). As with her mourning process after tearful partings as a child or her long-lived hatred for Gilbert Blythe, Anne finds a perverse satisfaction in the indulgence of excess emotion. Anne misses the rebirth of spring in Avonlea while studying at Queen’s, which she realizes wistfully as she prepares for exams. Despite her educational ambition to win the Avery Medal with her exceptional scholarship, Anne can’t wholly redirect her attention toward school when her studies must compete with her first love of nature. Even her end-of-term exams, which will determine whether or not Anne will receive her teaching license and which sometimes feel as though they “meant everything. . .don’t seem half so important” when Anne sees “the big buds swelling on those chestnut-trees and the misty blue air at the end of the streets” (370). Anne more explicitly voices her disinclination to outgrow the priorities of her youth when she tells Mrs. Rachel that she wants to "hunt up my old dreams" while home for the summer (375). Just as she promises Marilla before leaving for Queen’s that she is “not a bit changed—not really. . .only just pruned and branched out. The real me-- back here—is just the same,” Anne returns from Queen’s with a clear sense that she, despite her physical and intellectual growth and having been “pruned” or groomed to appear a certain way on the outside, remains the same “plant”-- that who she is at

31 Anne’s indulgence of sorrow is often connected to goodbyes, such as with Diana after the disastrous tea party, Mr. Phillips and Miss Stacy’s leaving the school, etc.
the core of her existence remains unchanged inside the more subdued, mature self she presents to others (358). Both Anne’s habits and statements suggest that her maturation process is in no way synonymous with a conversion to a new way of life. Though she has learned to play certain necessary social roles or put aside her uninhibited “pagan” instincts to run wild outdoors during the school year, she still presents a sense of identity in tune with the dreams and priorities of her youth that Christian adulthood has not wholly subsumed.

Though Patchell claims that “[a]fter Matthew’s death, prayer as communication with God has become real to Anne,” Anne’s reaction to Matthew’s death strikingly lacks major Christian signposts as well (Patchell 141). When witnessing Matthew’s heart attack, Anne knows he has died when she looks to his face and "there beheld the seal of the Great Presence" (380).32 There is something deliberately neutral, something not explicitly Christian, about this phrase, contrary to what one might expect to find as a response to death near the end of a conversion narrative. Similarly, “the white majesty of death had fallen upon him as one crowned” reads as far more Romantic than Presbyterian, and Anne’s coping process remains devoid of allusion to Presbyterian beliefs or responses to death (380). Aside from Anne’s statement that she “hope[s] he has roses like them [his mother’s white Scotch rose-bush] in heaven,” she never mentions a Christian afterlife or Matthew being with God. In this case, the lacunae speak more loudly than the text.

As always, nature brings her solace, and she has not outgrown the personification of nature during her period of grieving. After Matthew’s death, Anne first notices her ability to see beauty in the world and to laugh when “sunrises behind the firs and the pale

32 While the concept of the “Real Presence” relates to the sacrament of communion in the Presbyterian tradition, the “Great Presence” is not a Presbyterian term.
pink buds in the garden gave her the old inrush of gladness when she saw them” and when Diana makes her laugh (382). She hears “low, friendly speech” in the rustling of the poplars at Matthew’s grave and in “the whispering grasses growing at will among the graves” (393). On her way home through the Avonlea sunset, “the beauty of it all thrilled Anne’s heart and she gratefully opened the gates of her soul to it,” and Anne speaks to the world as though she were praying to God. Her murmur of “Dear old world. . . you are very lovely and I am glad to be alive in you” sounds very similar to a Christian prayer along the lines of “This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it” (394). The similarity between this expression of love to a supposedly sentient world and a prayer to a Christian God raises questions about Anne’s unaddressed prayers, particularly in settings like the “great sheen of moonlight” after receiving her exam results and in prayers “straight from the heart.” This ambiguity opens up the possibility that Anne does not always pray to a Christian God but instead communicates with her personal conception of sentient nature.

Even Mrs. Lynde, despite approving of the young woman Anne has become, notices “a good deal of the child about her yet in some ways” (Montgomery 393). While Anne may have learned to bake biscuits and serve tea to Mrs. Lynde’s standards, this outward success at performing conventionality does not necessarily negate her headstrong childhood sense of identity, or instinct, particularly in the ways that connect her to a feminized nature or the goddess Diana. Here she “ran down the clover slope like a deer” at Diana’s beckoning, which hearkens back to the scene in Anne’s childhood, when her pagan associations were strongest, in which Anne returns to school late because she was “wandering happily in the far end of

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33 Just as when she was eleven, nature and Diana stand out as the most important factors in Anne’s happiness.
the grove, waist deep among the bracken, singing softly to herself, with a wreath of rice lilies on her hair as if she were some wild divinity of the shadowy places” (393,171). Then, like now, “Anne could run like a deer” and the repetition of this metaphor emphasizes the survival of the pagan nature elements of Anne’s childhood in her young adult life (170). The myriad ways Anne’s behavior and speech in her mid-teens echo back to her childhood suggest that, despite the need for Montgomery to bring Anne’s plot arc to a fairly conventional end, Anne never truly leaves behind her childhood of subversion and countercultural spirituality.

"'God's in his heaven, all's right with the world'"

While some critics have deemed Anne’s final line in the novel, “God’s in his heaven, all’s right with the world,” to signify the novel’s reassertion of a conventional moral and social system and Anne’s complete conversion to Christianity, the pervasive pagan elements of Anne’s worldview (which she refuses to reject even as she prepares to enter her adult career) challenge this assumption. (396)34 Though Patchell claims that “‘Christian pantheism’ is an oxymoron. Theologically, Christianity and pantheism are opposed: in the former, God is creator of the universe, in the latter, God is one with the universe,” Anne finds a way to allow these conflicting perspectives to coexist. A sense of Christian ethics and a sense of nature spirituality comprise Anne’s personally-designed religion, demonstrating the possibility of adopting certain aspects of the Christian tradition within a wider, pantheistic sense of the sacredness of nature (Patchell 157). If God is one with the universe, God in “his heaven” reflects the rightness of a world in which each element of nature also exists in its own proper place, for Anne to experience

34 An allusion to Robert Browning's “Pippa Passes: Morning”
daily. Rather than functioning as the center of all creation, Anne’s God is one element within many equally important, beautiful elements of nature that allow her to imagine herself close to her creator. While critics declare that the Browning allusion signifies the completion of her conversion from pagan child to Christian adult, I suggest that it instead reflects a synthesis between the conventional Christianity Anne learns in Avonlea and the pantheistic instincts of her youth. Sorfleet claims that, in the final line of the novel, “the extent of Anne’ Christian journey is made clear. . . In spite of troubles, in spite of change, she trusts in God’s providence” (Sorfleet 179). Johnston posits that “[t]he closure has Anne, and everyone else, in their rightful place because ‘God’s in HIS heaven’” (qtd. in Patchell 146). Hilder considers the allusion proof of Anne’s journey “from the lonely orphan seeking wellness to confidence in [wellness’s] abiding presence,” a wellness created by God in his heaven (Hilder 51). While Hilder sees Anne of Green Gables as Montgomery’s process of reaffirming a Presbyterian orthodoxy for herself, even as she struggles against such an ideology, I instead see Anne “reinventing a personally tenable faith” through the weaving together of pagan and Christian elements (Hilder 38).

Conversion requires one to leave behind a previous state in favor of the new one, and though Anne may ultimately identify herself as Christian, her Christianity results from her filtering Presbyterian lessons through her own pagan perspective. In order for Anne to serve as a conversion narrative, Anne would have to disavow her previous understanding of the sacredness of a personified nature as distinct from God, which she not only fails to do but continues to resist through her personal forms of nature worship. Anne’s prioritization of nature, attraction to nature, solace in nature, and conversation with nature all refute Hilder’s claim that “Anne’s spirituality is decidedly Christ-centred rather than
pantheistic” (Hilder 45). Even if Anne fulfills the role Hilder assigns to her, “the child-saviour who points the way to God,” there remains until the end of the novel an ambiguity as to whether or not Anne leads to a traditionally Christian God or a sense of divinity in nature that is also compatible with faith in a Christian God (Hilder 50). Sorfleet acknowledges that Anne’s “presence by the window at the novel’s end symbolically supplants the presence of Mrs. Lynde at the window at the novel’s beginning: Anne’s wider vision has replaced Rachel’s narrow one” (Sorfleet 182). If Anne’s wider vision has supplanted Mrs. Lynde’s, so, too, might Anne’s melding of Christian and pagan take precedence over the traditional Presbyterianism that dominates Avonlea at the beginning of the novel. Anne symbolically assumes Rachel’s position as the voice of the community, the authority who determines Avonlea’s social and ethical standards within Avonlea, and she models a different form of religious engagement. Anne has developed into a young woman whose sense of Christianity continues to interact with her natural sensibilities, and Anne’s ability to create a religion that synthesizes the norms of both poetry and society reflects the powers of her imagination—and the potential for other creative young women to follow her lead. Rather than accepting a pre-packaged belief system, Anne follows the “scope for imagination” she sees in the wind and chooses her own hybrid beliefs and dually Christian and pagan systems of worship.
Conclusion

Anne’s creative interpretation of social roles as performances and her synthesis of pagan and Christian spirituality strongly demonstrate the ingenuity of childhood, the value of a child’s perspective. As Mary E. Doody Jones notes, Anne is an exceptional orphan; Montgomery’s orphan characters “over time grew more realistic” (422). However, this idealized portrait of an orphan helps Montgomery’s goal to challenge contemporary attitudes toward children and orphans. Montgomery’s celebration of the endearing and sympathetic “Romantic child” inspires empathy for orphans and suggests that children deserve at least the same care and support as animals. An unrealistically clever, kind, and educated child more easily instills the sense of pathos necessary to drum up support for improving Canadian orphanages and foster systems. Rather than fulfilling the Cuthbert’s need of cheap farm labor, Anne fulfills an emotional need neither Cuthbert noticed, and, in doing so, she highlights the emotional value of children instead. In demonstrating the intellectual capacity and discipline necessary to win a full scholarship to the prestigious Redmond College, Anne’s character drives home the point that children, particularly orphans, have value and potential that should be recognized, respected, and nurtured. Transcending a statement about gendered labor roles, Anne’s work in a schoolroom as opposed to in a farm field serves to challenge the nineteenth-century mentality that orphans offer the world nothing more than manual labor. Anne’s creativity, which Montgomery uses to make a case for the value of childhood, also gives her the power to negotiate with systems of social and religious authority, allowing her to create a subversive agency within a rigid, patriarchal, Christian society.
These chapters have addressed how Anne responds to social systems that authority figures dictate to her. When Marilla demands certain behaviors, like prayer, apology, and confession, of Anne, Anne transforms these unpleasant tasks into performances that bring her pleasure. Anne’s ability to distinguish between necessarily performed social roles and her own sense of self establishes a precedent for her interaction with religion. Rather than set aside her previous ideals and spiritual practices, Anne combines the newfound values and goals of the Christianity she learns from Mrs. Allan with her natural spiritualism to participate in Christianity on her own terms. In both her social performance and her approach to religion, Anne demonstrates agency in worldview creation. This modeled agency works against the more conventional and restrictive messages suggested by Anne’s maturation and eventual domesticity, a life that seemingly prioritizes heteronormative matrimony and child-bearing. Anne’s refusal to internalize externally-imposed standards without mediating such standards through her own preferences and inclinations challenges the idea that external conformity requires internal conversion. Anne’s success at satisfying the social expectations of the adults around her without leaving behind less conventional behaviors indicates to young female readers the possibility of such a successful negotiation of social expectations and contributes to the socially subversive undercurrents that make Anne far more than a pleasant tale of wish-fulfillment.³⁵

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