

Changing Clothes: Female Dress and the Widening Sphere in  
the Fiction of L.M. Montgomery

by  
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## Abstract

In her fiction, L.M. Montgomery (1874-1942) uses clothing as a tool to explore women's roles during a time when ideologies about women were quickly changing. As women took a more prominent place in the public sphere, their increased visibility put greater emphasis on their appearance. Written during a span of time that encompassed both the end of the Victorian era and the beginning of World War II, Montgomery's fiction shows dress being used in order to navigate new roles and negotiate changing power relations.

This thesis links specific changes in women's lives during Montgomery's lifetime to her fictional depictions of clothing. I investigate the increased presence of women in the paid labour force in relation to independence, both financial and emotional, and autonomy in dress. I also look at visibility and changing ideologies about sexuality and morality and how these moral concepts are rewritten by Montgomery to favour attention to dress. Lastly, I explore the influence of women, through their moral qualities, on the nation in the early part of the twentieth century and its connection to fashion, noting a decreased interest in both following World War I. I pay particular attention to three of Montgomery's novels: *Anne of Green Gables* (1908), *The Blue Castle* (1926), and *Jane of Lantern Hill* (1937), and a number of her short stories.

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## Introduction

I have often felt a certain envy of the women of my mother's and grandmother's generation. They lived their lives in a practically unchanged and apparently changeless world. Nothing was questioned — religion — politics — society — all nicely mapped out and arranged and organized. And my generation! What have we not seen? Everything we once thought immovable wrenched from its pedestal and hurled to ruins. All our old standards and beliefs swept away [...]. (Montgomery *SJLMM Vol. IV* 163)

L.M. Montgomery (1874-1942) notes in her journal the drastic changes that have occurred in her lifetime and the impact they have had on the lives of women. She lived through the end of the Victorian era, the Edwardian era, World War I, the Roaring Twenties, and the Depression and saw the beginning of World War II. The opening of various fields, such as medicine and law, to women, the women's suffrage movement, and the instabilities wrought by war and economic depression created a number of opportunities for women. As a result, there was a significant movement of women out of the domestic sphere, sometimes only temporarily, into the more visible public sphere, such as by entering the paid labour force or the political arena.

Alongside her record of these changes, such as her mention that "[t]he Ontario government has given the suffrage to women" (*SJLMM Vol. II* 211), Montgomery also writes of clothing and changes in fashion with, perhaps, greater frequency. She happily notes when styles she dislikes, such as short skirts, go out of fashion (*SJLMM Vol. IV* 5) and when old styles she enjoyed, such as puffed sleeves, come back into fashion (*CJLMM 1901-1911* 134 and *SJLMM Vol. IV* 231). Montgomery cared not only for the sartorial aspect of clothing, but also its emotional significance. She writes of clothing in times of triumph, such as the purchase of her very first evening dress on her first trip as a celebrity author (*CJLMM 1901-1911* 328), and in

times of sorrow, such as deciding what dress in which to bury her beloved friend and cousin, Frede Campbell (*SJLMM Vol. II* 296). Montgomery both wrote in detail about the clothes she wore as well as documented her dress in photographs, such as her wedding trousseau (*CJLMM 1901-1911* 413).<sup>1</sup>

Montgomery's detailed attention to clothing carried over from her journal to her fictional works. I argue that, in her novels and short stories, Montgomery depicts clothing as a generally positive influence in women's lives as she explores female societal roles during a time of great change for women, perhaps reflecting her own positive associations with clothing. Her characters use dress, at various times, as a tool to assert power, build relationships, enact change, or promote moral goodness. Building on Alison Matthews David and Kimberly Wahl's examination of the role of fashion in *Anne of Green Gables* (33-49) and Irene Gammel's discussion of the historical context in which Montgomery was writing about Anne's clothing (178-182), my project takes a similar approach to a wider variety of Montgomery's works, looking at specific changes that were occurring in women's history in Canada during Montgomery's lifetime and their influence in her writing about dress. I explore a number of Montgomery's short stories and novels, ranging from early to late in her writing career, paying particular attention to the novels *Anne of Green Gables* (1908), *The Blue Castle* (1926), and *Jane of Lantern Hill* (1937). Because Montgomery was a popular writer, invested in appealing to the majority, through her works one can track changing predominant attitudes toward women and their societal roles as well as note which attitudes remained the same throughout her lifetime. Montgomery's short stories also warrant closer study; although a number of them were collected and re-published in the late-1980s and the 1990s by Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston, few scholars have written about

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<sup>1</sup> More photographs of Montgomery in her wedding trousseau can be seen in the online exhibition *Picturing a Canadian Life: L.M. Montgomery's Personal Scrapbooks and Book Covers* curated by Elizabeth Rollins Epperly.

them and frequently they are only studied in their role as precursors to Montgomery's more famous *Anne of Green Gables*. Although she wrote several novels, short stories were Montgomery's first source of income from writing and her most prolific genre. In her short stories, Montgomery reused certain themes, issues, and plots, highlighting different aspects or exploring different viewpoints each time, making these a rich source of investigation and comparison.

Montgomery was an astute observer of the world around her who was compared with Jane Austen by contemporary critics (*SJLMM Vol. IV* 40). Although not particularly political herself, she grew up in a politically-involved family and was highly aware of the vast changes that were occurring in the world around her. Her fiction reflects this aspect of Montgomery's character. While overt mentions of political movements such as women's suffrage are rare in her fiction, Montgomery's works frequently feature female characters who espouse or explore feminist issues of the period, such as what constitutes appropriate women's work.<sup>2</sup> In my project, I will focus on three changes that occurred during Montgomery's lifetime and that seem to have had bearing on her own life: the large numbers of women in the paid workforce, the increased visibility of women outside of the home, and the influence of women on the nation. Montgomery was employed throughout her entire adult life, at various times a teacher, a proofreader for a newspaper, and, always, a writer. After the publication and widespread success of *Anne of Green Gables* (1908), Montgomery was often put in the public eye. Her readers were deeply interested in her and newspapers were happy to satisfy their curiosity by interviewing and reporting on Montgomery. Montgomery became a public personage. However, Montgomery also struggled to maintain her personal, private life with her family. She frequently writes in her journal about her

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<sup>2</sup> See Montgomery's short stories "In Spite of Myself" (1896) and "The Strike at Putney" (1903) for works that deal closely with the debate about women's roles in society.

difficulties as a minister's wife and a mother, more traditional roles that were considered important in their function of maintaining the moral integrity of the family and the community. As a popular writer, and often a writer for Sunday school papers, Montgomery was also considered an influence on the moral integrity of her readers by her publishers and the readers themselves. Thus, in her writing, Montgomery presents both expected, conventional morals as well as her own personal, sometimes surprisingly unconventional, beliefs.

Clothing becomes an important theme in exploring these changes because of its prominence in Montgomery's works as well as the importance that clothing had as a particularly feminine form of expression. Diana Crane writes of women using clothes as "non-verbal symbols as a means of self-expression" when other modes of assertion were denied them (100). Montgomery is able to say things through the clothing of her characters that she may not be able to write about openly. Fashions in dress also followed the drastic ideological changes about women that occurred throughout Montgomery's lifetime. Styles shifted from the elaborate, multi-layered dress worn during the Victorian and Edwardian eras to a freer, lighter form of dress during and after World War I to one that we would recognize as being quite similar to our modern dress in the 1930s and 1940s in its lack of underpinnings and greater prominence of masculine forms of dress such as pants. Many of these changes in dress were a result of women's changing occupations during World Wars I and II (Light and Parr 216-219), but they were also influenced by the dress reform movement of the nineteenth century (228) and new models of womanhood such as the "New Woman" of the 1890s and the "flapper" of the 1920s that were associated with particular forms of dress. Montgomery records these fashion changes, not only in her journals, but through the dress of her fictional female characters, in whose lives dress often plays an important role. In writing about these characters, Montgomery writes about new dresses

that they receive, what clothes they wear on particular occasions, and the effect of their dress on other people. Clothing is equally as important to her characters as it was to Montgomery herself, making it a fruitful line of enquiry when studying Montgomery's works.

In my first chapter, "Working for Independence," I examine the concepts of work and independence, both financial and emotional, and their relation to choice in dress and the creation or purchase of clothing. The various ways in which characters obtain or determine dress reflect the ways in which characters exercise power or are rendered powerless. This discussion takes place within the context of women's drastically increased presence within "the paid labour market" (Strong-Boag 42) in the late-nineteenth century and Montgomery's own positive feelings toward wage-earning. Montgomery was well aware of the increased opportunities and greater power available to those who had their own independent financial resources. Her experiences in the workforce, particularly her success as a writer, gave her an authority and confidence that was denied to her in her dependent and constrained youth living with her strict grandparents. Greater equality and balanced power relations between female characters of different ages and stations allow them to build stronger emotional ties. Montgomery's female characters who are able to engage in some sort of work, whether it is paid labour outside the home or the execution of important duties within the home, are also the most able to maintain or create relationships, particularly familial ones.

Characters who work are also better able to determine their own dress. Diana Crane's observation of the "enormous amounts of time and money" (100) that middle-class women expended on dress points to the connection between money and the ability to obtain clothing or dress materials, while her statement that women used clothing for expression because they were "[l]acking other forms of power" (100) links choice of dress with power over self. Thus, in the

power struggles that occur between characters, it is generally those characters who are employed or able to control money who are also able to determine the dress of others or themselves. While in Montgomery's fiction dress can be a site of power imbalance resulting in oppression, it can also be a means of bringing characters together. Clothing, particularly clothing acquired in a cooperative manner that takes into account the tastes and opinions of more than one person, becomes a way of empowering certain characters and enabling them to form relationships.

In Chapter Two, "Visibility, Vanity, and Change," I address the increased visual presence of women in the public sphere and the altered ideologies that Montgomery portrays with regard to vanity and concern with dress. Montgomery promotes a positive view of caring about appearance through her portrayals of attractive dress as a positive influence on emotions and self-image, in contrast with earlier ideologies that criticized vanity. Beth Light and Joy Parr remark on the way in which "Canadian women assumed larger roles in the public sphere of society" and the link between this change in roles and change in dress (228). Montgomery, when attending high-profile events as a celebrity author, always purchased new, pretty clothing, knowing that these events would be covered by reporters and photographers. Montgomery's female characters also recognize the need to dress appropriately for different environments, altering their dress when they move from the private, domestic sphere to the public sphere. One of the environments that Montgomery explores in her fiction is the stage; several of her young female characters appear on-stage in public. Montgomery addresses the moral problem of feminine vanity associated with the stage and with concern for dress. By portraying female characters on the stage positively, she repositions the concept of sinful vanity as something that is old-fashioned and outdated. She also portrays a number of morally-upright women as beautifully dressed, linking beautiful dress with moral goodness.

Montgomery depicts other positive effects on the wearer of beautiful and, more importantly, fashionable dress. Penny Storm describes the ability of adornment to positively influence others and to "increase [...] self-confidence" (6). She also writes of the power of comfortable clothing that increases competence and confidence (312). Montgomery's characters are able to empower themselves through the wearing of beautiful dress. This empowerment allows them to feel good about themselves and enact positive changes in their own lives. Wearing fashionable dress, characters are also better able to deal with change. In contrast, characters who refuse to be fashion-conscious are represented negatively; ultimately, their refusal to change with the times or be flexible results in their social isolation. Such rigidity is often associated with the Victorian, an era (1837-1901) that was coming to an end when Montgomery's writing career was just beginning. Thus, her heroic characters often show their competence and confidence while wearing lighter, less restrictive clothing such as overalls and bathing suits. Their ease of movement, facilitated by their modern dress, is mirrored by their ease of dealing with change.

However, Montgomery also realized problems associated with modernity, such as modernity's preoccupation with youth and sexuality, a preoccupation remarked upon by Veronica Strong-Boag (85). While Montgomery had no problem with including a judicious amount of sexuality in her fiction, she was discouraged, by both her publisher and her own inclinations, from including too much open sexuality in her works. Montgomery's female characters are able to display appropriate sexual attractiveness through the right clothing: clothing that is beautiful, but does not reveal too much. Often this clothing also has the effect of changing the perceptions of others; it alters the appearance of the wearer so that she is perceived to be the appropriate age for marriage: young girls are shown to be mature women and aging

spinsters regain lost youth. Montgomery is concerned with portraying the power of beautiful and fashionable clothing to enact positive change for the wearer. Her female heroines are able to put on new, confident, and happy personas in the same way that they put on new clothes.

Chapter Three, "Model Heroines and Maternal Feminism," investigates the virtuous qualities that Montgomery advocates in her fiction and the potential participation of her virtuous heroines in the political realm. Montgomery celebrates usefulness, capability, and maternalism in her exclusively white, middle-class, Anglo-Celtic heroines, but, over time, increasingly portrays them as having a less-active role in the political sphere through the decreasing presence of fashion in her novels. Both Cecily Devereux and Sharyn Pearce remark on Montgomery's prohibition of those who are not Anglo-Celtic and middle-class from performing Canadian-ness (qtd. in Pearce 233, Pearce 233) which, I argue, also prevents them from displaying Canadian virtue. Montgomery's class concerns affect not only which female characters can be considered to be virtuous, but also influence the situations in which they are able to display their virtue. Their need for certain types of formal clothing or their extensive wardrobes are tied to their middle-class status. Lower-class characters, in contrast, are portrayed as less competent, poorly dressed, and unable to effect any positive change in their wardrobes. Domesticity and Christianity also become important components of heroism in Montgomery's writing as Monika Hilder observes (214). They are displayed through nurturing maternal behaviour, which is linked to usefulness in its ability to help others. Clothing, in its capacity to cover and shelter, is portrayed as a symbol of maternity, but not always positively.

Maternal behaviour has an even wider influence in its connection with the movement of maternal feminism, a political movement prevalent in Canada in the early decades of the twentieth century that intended to take the moral influence women had in the home into a wider,

public sphere: the nation. Montgomery's contemporary Nellie McClung was strong proponent of maternal feminism, laying out guidelines for women's participation on the national stage in her book *In Times Like These* (1915). McClung also created a fictional heroine, Pearlie Watson, in her 1908 bestseller *Sowing Seeds in Danny*, who is not unlike Montgomery's own female protagonists, to promote her political agenda in a trilogy of novels that often mirrors McClung's own career. However, Montgomery's heroines are far less politically-involved than McClung's and, over time, they become decreasingly involved with the wider world and the politics of that world. This decrease corresponds with a decreased interest in fashion, a connection that I stress because of fashion's reliance on interactions with others in a wider sphere, or "cross-cultural contact" (Storm 288), to thrive. In Montgomery's fiction, it is characters who care about fashion who are most interested in politics and having an active role outside of the domestic sphere.

As one looks at a range of Montgomery's fiction, the power of dress comes through clearly. While Montgomery's depictions of dress and their relation to female characters are frequently positive, creating happiness or self-confidence, Montgomery does not allow herself to be unquestioning about the power that dress contains. The wrong clothing is equally powerful in its ability to subdue and oppress. It is these tensions that create the richness in Montgomery's work, as characters struggle to assert independence, empower themselves, or influence others through clothing.

## Chapter One: Working for Independence

"I love you as dear as if you were my own flesh and blood" (AGG 382) says Marilla to Anne as they share their grief over the passing of Matthew, the other member of their family, near the end of *Anne of Green Gables* (1908). Emotional bonds between family members and, as an extension of the family, members of the community play an important role in the works of L.M. Montgomery. Her fiction often deals with female characters navigating new familial or communal roles as they marry, move, or are adopted and they must find appropriate and fulfilling ways to be daughters, mothers, young women, and old maids. While Montgomery's fiction explores female emotional dependence through the creation of relationships, it also looks at female financial dependence. Montgomery worked outside the home as a teacher and in a newspaper office before her marriage, in addition to maintaining a career as a writer throughout her life. She recognized the importance of money in providing opportunities for women that they would not have otherwise. Upon receiving a royalty cheque for \$7000, she reflects, "If I could only have had one tenth of that sum when I was a young girl, struggling for an education and enduring many humiliations and disappointments because of my lack of money. A little of it then would have saved me much" (CJLMM 1901-1911 289). Montgomery's female characters are just as interested in being able to obtain financial resources. Marilla seems to be echoing Montgomery's sentiments when she says to Anne, "I believe in a girl being fitted to earn her own living whether she has to or not. You'll always have a home at Green Gables as long as Matthew and I are here, but nobody knows what is going to happen in this uncertain world and it's just as well to be prepared" (AGG 319). While Anne may be able to rely on Marilla and Matthew for emotional and financial support, too much financial dependence can be harmful because it leaves

one unprepared to deal with the larger world. Montgomery's characters must then be careful in navigating emotional and financial dependencies.

Montgomery explores power relations between women through clothing, examining both emotional and financial dependencies. The exercise of agency in dress reflects the degree of agency characters are able to exercise in their lives. Diana Crane states, "Upper- and middle-class women devoted enormous amounts of time and money to creating elaborate wardrobes in order to present themselves appropriately to members of their social milieus (Smith 1981). Lacking other forms of power, they used non-verbal symbols as a means of self-expression" (100). In Crane's interpretation, clothing can be used by women to assert themselves, to present who they are to the world. Montgomery's journals also show a belief in the ability of clothing to be assertive, perhaps even confrontational, in her use of the term "war-paint" (*CJLMM 1889-1900* 76) to describe the dress that she and her female friends wear when dressing up for public events. In her fiction, Montgomery portrays female characters navigating fluctuating power relations as they determine what they wear and what others wear in order to assert their power and ideas of identity or, in contrast, submit to the dictates of others as to what they will wear and who they are.

This chapter will explore assertions of female independence, both emotional and financial, or lack thereof, as they are expressed through female dress. It will focus on female characters in their roles as daughters and mothers, young women and old maids in order to investigate issues of dependency at various stages in the female life cycle, temporarily disregarding wifhood, which will be addressed in its relation to sexual attractiveness in the following chapter. I will show that emotional independence is symbolized by characters choosing their own clothing because it is a means of self-expression, and that a repression of this form of self-expression

comes from prioritizing the needs of others at the expense of oneself. I will also address the similar way that the purchasing or making of clothing represents an exhibition of independence, usually, financial independence, in contrast with the passive reception of clothing from others. Montgomery demonstrates that women can find empowerment through choosing, purchasing, or making their own dress. However, Montgomery's female characters must balance their assertions of power and independence with their dedication to their communities by using beautiful clothing to build and strengthen social bonds.

In Montgomery's fiction, it is single, young women who are often shown to be the most emotionally fulfilled and financially independent. Old enough to work, but too young to be burdened with the stigmatized label of old maid, these women are portrayed as active and as having a high degree of agency. Though a woman would often expect to rely on male relatives for financial support, in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries it became common for young, middle-class women to be employed in "the paid labour market" (Strong-Boag 42). The short stories "Penelope's Party Waist" (1904) and "Aunt Caroline's Silk Dress" (1907) depict young women who are either employed or are in training for a career. Although Cook and Mitchinson state that "the pattern of life for Canadian women was a relatively short period of work before marriage" (166), in these stories the short period of work tends to lead to building and maintaining non-marital familial relationships, departing from traditional societal expectations as well as romantic conventions. Strong emotional bonds between active, independent women is what is privileged in these stories and it is through clothing that these bonds are made and preserved when endangered.

"Penelope's Party Waist" is concerned with the creation of emotional bonds, particularly in relation to the rebuilding of the family structure. This story features two orphaned sisters,

Doris and Penelope; Penelope is in training to become a teacher and Doris has a position "as typewriter in an uptown office" ("Penelope" 158). Cook and Mitchinson comment on the prevalence of female teachers in the late-nineteenth century (167) and Beth Light and Joy Parr remark on the increased presence of women as office clerks (52). Montgomery herself was employed in both jobs when she was a young woman. Doris works "to run their tiny establishment and keep Penelope in school dresses and books" ("Penelope" 158). Penelope receives an invitation to a party but is unable to attend because the girls cannot afford suitable clothing. While they have a supportive and caring sisterly relationship, their inability to attend such social gatherings represents a threat to their ability to create social bonds in the future, outside of the home, as shown by Penelope's joke about people giving up inviting the girls out "in sheer despair" (157) of their ever accepting. It is this threat, in addition to Doris' desire to see Penelope have a good time, that prompts Doris' activity in providing Penelope with party clothing.

Although Doris' salary does not enable her to purchase an appropriate dress for Penelope to wear, the independent spirit that keeps the two girls striving to remain a financially independent household also works toward creating a dress for Penelope. The quilt, originally made by their Grandmother Hunter, sent to the girls by their Aunt Adella is transformed by Doris' innovative and creative mind as well as her skilled hands into a lovely "waist" or bodice for Penelope to wear. Doris rips out the lining of the old quilt, made from "a soft, creamy yellow silk, with a design of brocaded pink rosebuds all over it" (160), for the material. The making of clothing is an assertion of agency on the part of the maker; the ability to enforce one's will on material goods in order to shape them and transform them into something different, a point

emphasized by the use of the term "creation" (161) to describe the waist. The act of sewing also reflects the creation of emotional bonds as separate parts are joined with stitching.

The quilt, in its new incarnation as a beautiful waist, continues to link female family members. At the party, Penelope, dressed in her new silk waist, meets Mrs. Fairweather, who recognizes the silk as that which she and her half-sister wore as girls. Her sister turns out to have been Penelope and Doris' Grandmother Hunter and the girls are soon adopted by their newly-discovered great-aunt, who insists on being called "Aunt Esther" and is able to support them comfortably and give Penelope "her longed-for musical education" and allow Doris to remain at home (163). Not only do Doris and Penelope obtain an aunt to replace the role the death of their parents has left empty, but the girls are also able to "take the place of [her] own dear little granddaughter" who "died six years ago" leaving Aunt Esther with a broken and lonely household (164). The determination of Doris and her practical skill lead to the recreation of a whole and healthy household for all of the women. Bonds that were broken are repaired, just as Grandmother Hunter's pulled-apart dress is stitched back together.

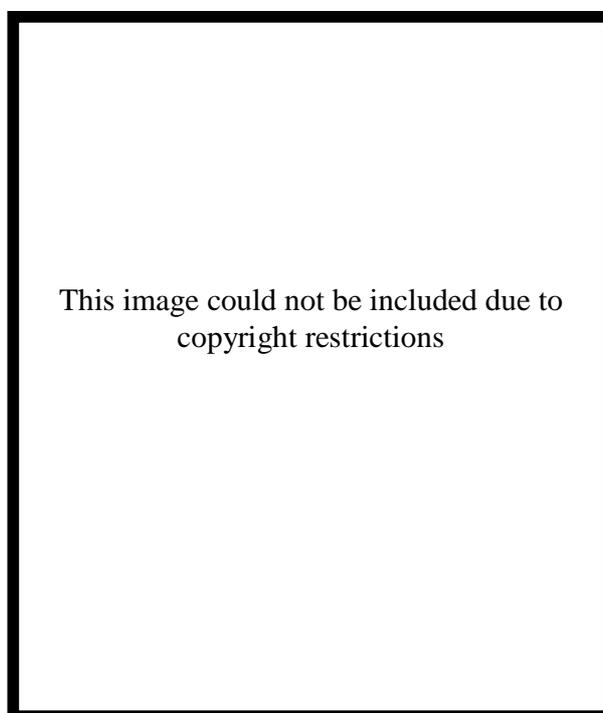
In "Aunt Caroline's Silk Dress," another story of orphaned sisters who are prevented from attending events because of unsuitable dress, financial independence takes on a more prominent role. Carry works as a seamstress and Patty, like Penelope, is at school to become a teacher. Carry works to pay the interest on the mortgage of their "old home" ("Aunt Caroline" 54) which they are in danger of losing because her recent illness has put her behind in payments. The financial struggle of the two girls is what threatens to undo their household, which has already been fractured by the loss of their parents. The loss of their home would also mean the loss of the symbolic connection to their departed parents. Carry is invited to the wedding of an old friend in a larger, richer town and Patty is invited to the party of a wealthy, desirable acquaintance, thus

these events represent an opportunity to connect with a more financially well-endowed portion of society. Unfortunately for the girls, there is only enough dress material between them for one; Carry possesses a "silk organdie" ("Aunt Caroline" 53) given to her from an aunt. The insufficiency of dress materials mirrors the insufficiency of financial resources. Out of her love for her sister, Carry secretly makes the organdie into a dress for Patty, leaving herself dress-less. Carry's selflessness is rewarded when Patty gets the idea for Carry to "make over Aunt Caroline's silk dress" (59).

The silk dress in question is an old, ugly gown left to Carry three years ago by the girls' great-aunt Caroline, an old widow who was kept under close watch by her nephew and his wife to prevent her from giving away anything of value. The silk dress is an old-fashioned, "hideous thing" of "green silk, with huge yellow brocade flowers as big as cabbages all over it" (59), but Patty is able to imagine it transformed by an overdress of black lace made from leftovers from their mother's store and their grandmother's shawl. Carry is portrayed actively working with the old dress in her hands, "rip[ping] the skirt breadths apart" (61). This industry and activity is rewarded when within the dress is revealed one hundred dollars, a secret gift from Aunt Caroline. In the note accompanying the money, she writes, "They [the nephew and his wife with whom she lives] would not let me give it to you if they knew, so I have thought of this way of getting it to you. I have sewed five twenty-dollar bills under the lining of this skirt, and they are all yours" (61). With this money Carry and Patty are able to pay the interest on the mortgage and keep their household intact.

In a variety of ways, the appearance of the silk dress represents financial value. Its green colour and Carry's mention of cabbages bring to mind the concept of paper money. The Oxford English Dictionary records this use of cabbage as a slang term for money as early as 1903 (n.p.),

just a few years before Montgomery published this story. While Montgomery's contemporary readers may not have noticed such a reference, later readers may have and certainly the green colour would have connoted money. The silk brocade itself speaks of wealth in its fibre and weave and Aunt Caroline states, "It's a good silk" (60), further speaking for its quality and the amount of money that must have been spent to purchase it (see Figure 1.1). More closely related to the concept of financial independence is Carry's remark "that skirt is stiff enough to stand alone" ("Aunt Caroline" 60); the skirt containing the money will enable the girls to become financially stable, even though they are alone in the world. In these various ways, Montgomery hides the solution to the sisters' financial problems in plain sight. It is interesting to note that the young women of both this story and "Penelope's Party Waist" take items that are ugly and seemingly worthless and transform them into beautiful items of dress. They are able to recover financial value that is lost or unseen through their independent, self-reliant actions.



**Figure 1.1: "Brocade Silk Dress." An expensive dress like Aunt Caroline's with the "huge yellow brocade flowers" that were fashionable when it was made c.1890. (*Newport Mansions*)**

Aunt Caroline lacks the independence demonstrated by her two young nieces, but is able to become an active agent through her silk dress. Her position as an older widow, unable to work, leaves her vulnerable to the machinations of others. She is "persuaded to deed" her "snug farm" to a selfish and greedy nephew (60) and lives as a dependent in his household. It is this loss of her primary financial resource, the farm which could be rented or leased and which would produce agricultural products that could be sold, that leads to her fall into unhappy, oppressive dependency as a guest in another's house, a similar fate to that which threatens Carry and Patty if they cannot pay off the mortgage on their home. Aunt Caroline's clever plan to hide her secret cache of money in the dress in order to give it to Carry is a creative way of reasserting her power over her resources. She exercises her agency by determining who is worthy of receiving the money: "You were always a good girl, Carry, and you've worked hard, and I've given Edward enough" (61), and then acting on this decision without consulting anyone else. Aunt Caroline's act of sewing is, like Doris', restorative, if only temporarily in its ability to allow her to recapture her independence of action.

In contrast, many of Montgomery's older female characters face a lack of agency and independence. Veronica Strong-Boag states that "unmarried women [...] were regularly dismissed as pitiful creatures who were emotionally flawed" (103). Montgomery's portrayals of spinsters in "The Romance of Aunt Beatrice" (1902) and "The Dissipation of Miss Ponsonby" (1906) certainly conform to this stereotype, as does Valancy in the early part of *The Blue Castle* (1926). These middle-aged women are undesirable dependents in their families' homes who, due to social constraints, have been prevented from engaging in paid employment and are thus unable to enjoy the independence that girls like Doris and Carry possess. They are put upon by their relatives, Aunt Beatrice by her wealthy brother and demanding sister-in-law, Miss

Ponsonby by her tyrannical father, and Valancy by her family in general. They lack the ability to create their own households through marriage and must therefore rely on the financial support of relatives other than husbands. It is interesting to note that Montgomery's stories about old maids portray clothing as a catalyst to bring about marriage, as opposed to other familial bonds.

In the two short stories, which are practically identical, both older women are positioned as aged Cinderellas who are helped by active, youthful godmothers: Margaret in "The Romance of Aunt Beatrice" and Elizabeth and Jerry in "The Dissipation of Miss Ponsonby." Aunt Beatrice and Miss Ponsonby are both given dresses that belong to the girls and these dresses contain a transformative power that gives youth to the older women. Aunt Beatrice says that the dress makes her feel "like a girl again" ("Romance" 218), while Miss Ponsonby calls her experience "a dream of lost youth" ("Dissipation" 146). By being the passive recipients of clothing, the two women are simultaneously infantilized, by being dressed by others like children, and given a temporary youthful agency, the ability to act like their younger counterparts. The beautiful dresses given to them also give the women a sense of agency and independence that allows them to act in rebellious ways. Aunt Beatrice attends the party in spite of her sister-in-law's disapproval and Miss Ponsonby goes as far as leaving by the window and climbing down a tree to escape from her father's house and get to the party (146). It is at these events that the two women will reconnect with their past lovers. With their prospective marriages, they will move from one financial dependency, from their family's homes to their husband's homes, a comment on the inability of financially dependent women to be active and truly independent. However, these women recognize the emotional starvation they suffer in their unsatisfactory homes and, when wearing beautiful clothes, they are able to create new bonds and to search out more emotionally fulfilling households.

Valancy is just such another unfulfilled old maid at the beginning of *The Blue Castle*. Her story has many echoes of Anne's, which will be explored below; she is unwanted because she is "not a boy — or at least, a pretty girl" (39), she must rely on the charity of others for her enjoyment, hoping that a relative might "fling her 'a chance,' like a bone to a dog" (21), and she is kept silent from voicing her desires and opinions by other, older people of authority like her mother. Such impositions are particularly problematic for Valancy because she is an adult, not a girl like Anne, who allows herself to be infantilized, such as when she subsides after her faltering protest against being called by the childish nickname Doss (16). Gabriella Åhmansson claims that Valancy's rebellion throughout the novel "is a process of maturation, which means discarding childish things and assuming adult responsibilities" (151). While Åhmansson states that this maturation involves exposing society's repressive "hypocrisy and narrow-mindedness in general, but in particular the double standards and the 'stigmatising and controlling' of female sexuality" (151), I believe that another part of this assumption of "adult responsibilities" is finding meaningful work and financial independence.

Although published in 1926, *The Blue Castle*, with its lack of reference to World War I and its mentions of the Klondike (169) and tin Lizzies (28), seems to be set in the first decade of the twentieth century. It was around this time that "women's clubs and organizations had begun to proliferate" (Cook and Mitchinson 198). Cook and Mitchinson state that these clubs gave "women a sense of doing something useful and humanitarian, a sense of importance " (199). Montgomery herself was involved with a number of women's clubs such as the I.O.D.E. (Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire), the local Hypatia club, and the Women's Institute. Such clubs endeavoured to solve social problems such as "disease, unsanitary living and working conditions, delinquency, and prostitution" (Cook and Mitchinson 198) as well as promote culture

and Christian morality. Though Valancy does not participate in such groups, her motivation to leave her mother's oppressive household and work as a housekeeper for the consumptive, fallen woman, Cissy Gay, partakes of a similar attitude: she hopes to better Cissy's situation by alleviating her social seclusion and, as a result, is able to feel useful and important. When she arrives at the Gay house she realizes, "She was suddenly happy. Here was some one who needed her — some one she could help. She was no longer a superfluity" (*BC* 86). Valancy is able to gain a sense her own value, thus paving the way for her to build fulfilling relationships between equal partners, as opposed to relationships in which she is put into the position of inferior or dependent.

Valancy's entrance into the paid labour force as a housekeeper also echoes Strong-Boag's summing up of debates about unmarried women at this time: "Could a woman support herself alone and were there emotional alternatives to a husband and children?" (104). For Valancy, the answer to these questions is yes and no. Epperly states that Montgomery's heroines' "rebellions are, after all, harmless (as far as the establishment is concerned) since the heroines eventually adopt traditional attitudes and values (and roles)" (239). Valancy learns how to be financially independent by working and taking control of her savings account, but ultimately finds fulfillment in her marriage to Barney Snaith. However, Valancy's marriage is not necessarily to be considered negatively. Valancy's unconventional marriage, a marriage of convenience proposed by Valancy herself and described by Åhmansson as "sexual fulfillment, [...] a love affair" (151), allows her to build her own emotionally-fulfilling relationship with Barney away from the stifling oppression of her mother's household. And Valancy's brief foray into the world of paid employment, which sets her apart from characters like Aunt Beatrice and Miss Ponsonby, also proves her ability to provide for herself financially should she ever need to.

Valancy's wardrobe is closely connected with her independence. When she lives in her mother's house, what she wears is entirely dictated by her family. Coming from "a community and connection where the unmarried are simply those who have failed to get a man" (BC 1), Valancy, in her unmarried state, is deemed by her society to be a failure at building emotional and financial bonds outside of the family. If pretty clothes are used to create emotional ties, Valancy's inability to do so, and lack of prospects for such, seems to render her unworthy of beautiful clothing in the eyes of her family. They relegate her to grey "flannel petticoats" (20) and "brown gingham" (12). Valancy is at the mercy of the choices of others when it comes to her clothes: "Aunt Isabel had decreed that Valancy should never wear colours. They did not become her. When she was young they allowed her to wear white, but that had been tacitly dropped for some years" (BC 48). Aunt Isabel relegates Valancy to a colourless life at the same time as she defines who Valancy is by making distinctions about what would and would not "become" her. The use of the word "allow" also stresses Valancy's passive role in dressing herself. While Valancy is forced to wear ugly, long-lasting clothes, her beautiful and desirable cousin Olive wears "ruffled silk and sheer lawn and filmy lace flounces. But Olive's father had 'married money' [...] so there you were" (20); this statement once again recalls Valancy's perceived inability to marry, money or otherwise. Building on Åhmansson's connection between Valancy's body and her room, I believe that the attitude taken by Valancy's mother toward her room, is also that taken toward Valancy's dress. Mrs. Stirling's decree: "There was no money for rooms nobody ever saw" (3) is also applied to Valancy's wardrobe; the family is unwilling to pay to dress Valancy prettily because she is "insignificant-looking" (12), beneath notice, thus it is not worthwhile to allocate any significant money toward her clothing. As long as Valancy relies on

the charity of others, she is perceived as unimportant, unattractive, and unworthy of beautiful clothing.

It is only when Valancy finally leaves the stifling environment of her mother's home, motivated by the mistaken notion that she is terminally ill and has only one year to live, that she is able to obtain her own clothing, pretty clothing that reflects her new, adult self. Employed by Abel Gay as a housekeeper and a companion to Cissy, Valancy finally has her own disposable income: "When Abel Gay paid Valancy her first month's wages [...] Valancy went into Deerwood and spent every cent of it" (102). Valancy spend her money on new frivolous and pretty clothes: "She got a pretty green crêpe dress with a girdle of crimson beads, at a bargain sale, a pair of silk stockings to match, and a little crinkled green hat with a crimson rose in it. She even bought a foolish little beribboned and belaced nightgown" (102). Finding that she is important and significant to someone, namely Cissy, Valancy is able to assert a belief in her own value through the spending of financial resources on herself. Prior to this, Valancy's only use of money for her own concerns is when she secretly takes out a small portion of the legacy left to her by her father to pay for a doctor's bill, money that she "was never allowed to use even the interest of" (10). As a wage-earning woman, Valancy no longer has to spend in secret and her purchases can take on visible form. Later, after her marriage, Valancy takes "some of her two hundred dollars out of the bank and [spends] it on pretty clothes" (156), showing herself to be in control of her own money. Although she is married, she still has economic resources separate from her husband.

Valancy's transformation from put-upon old maid to self-actualized adult woman is not so straightforward as a simple change of clothes. Although Valancy has purchased the clothes, she is not, at first, able to wear them; "habit and custom were still all-powerful" (102) in

governing her dress. It is not until she completely rejects the imposition of the label "old maid" and all its attendant implications, such as being "pitiful" and dependent, that she is able to wear her new clothes out in public. She characterizes her original discomfort in the green dress as "old-maidishness" and refuses to "be ridden by it" (104). With this action, Valancy moves from an unnatural prolonged adolescence to adulthood: "It was the first time she had worn a pretty dress since the organdies of her early teens. And *they* had never made her look like this" (104). The pretty clothing that she has now is a sign of her adulthood; they are "becoming" (102) and sexually attractive (particularly evocative of this is the flimsy nightgown), not like the pretty clothes that would have come from her mother when she was a child.

Although Valancy's self-imposed distance from her family is portrayed as a desirable separation, a complete lack of emotional ties would be damaging and harmful. After Cissy's death, Valancy must find a new fulfilling emotional bond. Her marriage to Barney, "reputed jail-breaker, infidel, forger, and defaulter" (109), further breaks down Valancy's bond to her stolidly respectable family while simultaneously creating a new family and household for Valancy. Valancy's marriage is also marked by new clothing. Much of this clothing is described in terms that show the distance between Valancy and her family. Valancy's "pale green bathing-suit [...]" would have given her clan their deaths if they had ever seen her in it" (157) and her "scarlet-collared blanket coat" makes Valancy look "like a young girl" much to the consternation of her Uncle Benjamin, who thinks she ought to look as though she were suffering for transgressing against her family (171). Other items of clothing reflect Valancy's new bond with Barney: "It was after she began wearing [her blue chiffon dress] that Barney began calling her Moonlight" (156-157). Through Valancy's changes in clothing, as well as her change in name from "Doss" to

"Moonlight," Valancy shows herself to be grown up and emotionally independent from her oppressive family as well as able to develop new, emotionally-fulfilling relationships.

Montgomery's girl characters, as they mature and go through journeys of self-discovery, must also navigate assertions of independence, even while they are placed in positions of dependency because of their young age. Their age seems to necessitate their financial dependence upon others since they are too young to be employed in the labour market like their older counterparts. Emotional bonds become especially important because of their position within the family. Light and Parr state, "For young girls, independent experience outside the shelter and parental discipline of their families was much more limited in this period [1867-1920] than it had been earlier" (9). Children were thus more in contact with, and at the mercy of, their family members. Montgomery's young girl heroines, Anne and Jane, exhibit different ways of dealing with these impositions through their attitudes toward dress. They both recognize the importance of obtaining dress that is in keeping with their own perceptions of self, but, because of differences in temperament and situation, have different capacities for being able to act on such inclinations.

In *Anne of Green Gables*, Montgomery stresses the importance of emotional bonds and the resulting vulnerability of one who needs, but lacks them. Susan Drain remarks on "how important belonging is" and that this belonging is "not one of subordination, possession, or conformity, but of interdependence and tension" (16). Anne must learn to belong to the community by building strong, mutually beneficial, relationships with other characters, most importantly Marilla and Matthew, the people who bring Anne into their family unit and enable her to stay in Avonlea. Shirley Foster and Judy Simons stress Anne's empowerment through "her manipulation of language" and ability to name (161), but I argue that Anne, as an orphan girl, is

often placed in a position of vulnerability and lack of power that forces her into silence. Anne's position in Avonlea is precarious from the beginning. Her sex makes her undesirable as an adoptee for the Cuthberts who want "a smart, likely boy of about ten or eleven" (AGG 45) and are thus surprised by the arrival of a girl instead of the boy they have requested. Margaret Anne Doody states, "Not being a boy is a defect as culturally perceived. To be a girl is to be imperfect, a poor substitute for the real thing and thus in some sense unwanted. [...] Orphans are not wanted, are superfluous [...]" (11). Anne is acutely aware of these disadvantages and the resulting uncertainty of her remaining in Avonlea with the Cuthberts, although it would be a salvation for her. Marilla muses on Anne's history: "What a starved, unloved life she had had — a life of drudgery and poverty and neglect [...]. No wonder she had been so delighted at the prospect of a real home. It was a pity she had to be sent back" (89). Anne's need to evade returning to such an emotionally-starved environment makes her desperate. Strong-Boag remarks that "there is little reason to believe that most orphans finally found a Marilla and Mathew [sic] Cuthbert to shelter them" (17). Anne seems well aware of this situation and her good luck in finding the Cuthberts. She tells Marilla, "I'll try to do and be anything you want me, if only you'll keep me" (95), expressing a willingness to efface her independent identity in order to be a part of the Cuthbert family.

Anne endeavours to become the ideal daughter of the house and make her family proud not only by striving to excel in such things as school, but also by silencing her desires so as to appear grateful and deserving of the Cuthberts' love. In attempting to become the daughter of the Cuthberts, Anne must act the part. Alison Matthews David and Kimberly Wahl explain that "children and adolescents of this period would have been dressed by parents and relatives" (42); thus, in order to be perceived as a family member Anne must be dressed by her adoptive parents.

Anne's passivity toward choice in clothing echoes her efforts to suppress herself and allow herself to be defined by others. She must rely on others for her clothing and hope that these clothes may align in some way with her inner, beauty-loving self. This dependence is particularly evident in the passage of the novel in which Anne first receives new clothing from Marilla to replace the skimpy orphanage clothing she has arrived wearing (AGG 127-128). Marilla makes plain, unadorned dresses for Anne, without taking into account any of Anne's aesthetic yearnings, represented by puffed sleeves. Anne's lack of enthusiasm for her new clothes causes Marilla to cast up Anne's dependent status to her, saying, "I should think you'd be grateful to get most anything after those skimpy wincey things you've been wearing" (128). Anne, as a poor dependent, is expected to be thankful for any show of charity towards her. Anne seems to feel no entitlement to choice in the dress she wears. Although she prays for puffed sleeves, she states, "I didn't suppose God would have time to bother about a little orphan girl's dress. I knew I'd just have to *depend* on Marilla for it" (128, emphasis added). As a "little orphan girl," Anne categorizes herself as being beneath the notice of God and dependent upon the benevolence of the people around her, at least in the matter of dress. Self-expression is a privilege not to be expected by poor orphan girls, so Anne must tell herself that it is of little consequence if her outer appearance does not match her inner personality.

Anne's silence and acquiescence are her ways of coping with her dependence. After Marilla's accusation of being unappreciative, Anne reassures Marilla of her thankfulness in order to perform the role of ideal daughter, even as she attempts to express her discontent diplomatically and hesitantly: "'Oh, I *am* grateful,' protested Anne, 'But I'd be ever so much gratefuller if — if you'd made just one of them with puffed sleeves'" (128). However, this is Anne's only protest against wearing ugly, sensible clothing. Hilary Emmett, in her essay dealing

with silence and death in the *Anne* novels, claims, "Through the strategic use of silence, understatement, humour, and displacement, Montgomery embeds in these novels traumatic stories of bodies and minds in pain" (85). Anne's prolonged silence on the subject of her clothing implies her trauma: the psychological damage of being unvalued and unwanted which leads to her denial of self-worth and the belief that she is undeserving of self-expressive clothes.

Anne's devalued perception of self also permits others to define her identity. When she is dressing with the help of Diana for the White Sands Hotel concert at which she will perform, Anne is silenced once again and allows Diana to define her by dictating her clothing. Irene Gammel states that "Maud [Montgomery] understood that fashion is a powerful rite of female bonding" (182), thus this scene is suffused with the emotional give and take of the two girls. Diana is an important emotional resource for Anne because she is Anne's "bosom friend;" a close friend, like a caring family, is something that Anne has lacked prior to coming to Green Gables. Diana recommends that Anne wear her "white organdy" (345), but Anne questions this decision, asking, "Do you really think the organdy will be best? [...] I don't think it's as pretty as my blue-flowered muslin — and it certainly isn't so fashionable" (347). Diana overrules Anne's tentative differing opinion and, in doing so, also reasserts her authority by declaring her own definition of Anne: "'But it suits you ever so much better,' said Diana. 'It's so soft and frilly and clinging. The muslin is stiff, and makes you look too dressed up. But the organdy seems as if it grew on you'" (347). The material deemed suitable for Anne is that which is "soft" and "clinging," not "stiff." One can see a reflection of Anne's emotional need in the clinginess of the material. She is soft and compliant, not stiff and independent, able to stand on her own. Anne's softness is further demonstrated by her response to Diana's dictum: "Anne sighed and yielded" (347). Diana continues to dress Anne, much like one might dress a doll, and Anne no longer attempts to assert

any opinions of her own. Instead she asks Diana, "Shall I put my pearl beads on?" (349), willing to acquiesce with whatever Diana tells her to do. While Anne would prefer to wear the beads, this preference seems to be mostly due to the fact that wearing them would please Matthew, who purchased them for her, not because she has any personal inclination toward them. In spite of this desire to please Matthew, Anne also wishes to please the critical aesthetic eye of Diana and would be willing to forgo the pearl beads if Diana deemed it advisable. Anne feels the need to please those around her, even if it is at the expense of the expression of her own desires. However, Anne's concern for others usually also results in some benefit to herself; in this case, Anne acquiescence will result in her being beautifully attired for the concert due to Diana's impeccable taste.

It is not only emotional need that pushes Anne into passivity, but also financial need. Anne, as a penniless young girl, is in need of the financial support that the Cuthberts can offer. Part of the Cuthberts' motivation in adopting a boy is the fact that the boy would be able to help Matthew around the farm thus serving an economic purpose by acting as labour that would result in financial gain in the form of agricultural produce. In contrast, Anne brings no material value to Green Gables. Marilla asks, "What good would she be to us?" (73), since Anne does not have any visible marketable skills. Anne is able to "wash dishes right" and look after children (80), but Marilla herself can wash dishes and there are no children for Anne to care for at Green Gables. Nor does Anne have any financial resources of her own. When she arrives, "all [her] worldly goods" fit into "a shabby, old-fashioned carpet bag" and the quantity of goods does not make the bag "heavy" (52). Anne lacks possessions and the potential for earning them. She is dependent upon the charity of others for financial support.

When thinking about Anne's dependence on others for dress, one might ask why Anne does not make a virtue of industriousness and sew her own clothes, an activity that would allow Anne freedom of self-expression but would also be considered suitable for a young girl or daughter of a middle-class family. She is made to sew patchwork because it is an activity that Marilla seems to feel will help better Anne by making her more "sober" and "steady" (145), but her sewing never extends to clothing. David and Wahl also note, "There are no scenes of Anne and Diana window-shopping in town or poring over the latest fabrics available to them, either at local stores or from mail order catalogues" (46). Anne is never involved in the acquisition of clothing, although other characters around her pick out fabrics, design embellishments, and sew and fit dresses. Her involvement with dress never moves beyond fantasizing about beautiful clothing and being a passive wearer of the real clothing given to her. Anne is not shown with the materials in hand, either actual fabric or the monetary capital that could be transformed into dress. Anne lacks the resources to dress herself in the way that Crane describes upper- and middle-class women as doing: to use dress to express the self in a non-verbal way (100). Her lack of financial resources, depicted earlier by the few "worldly goods" that fit into her carpet bag, seems to prevent Anne from having anything to do with material goods in general.

Instead, it is other people's money and its ability to purchase dress materials that dictate the clothing that Anne is able to wear. David and Wahl remark on the way in which Anne's clothing is purchased by others: "Anne's wardrobe is not actively acquired but given to her as a charitable donation, a practical necessity, or a loving gift" (42). The "three hundred yards of wincey" donated to the Hopetown asylum are what clothe "[a]ll the orphans" (54), including Anne. Orphans living on charity must wear what they are given because they cannot afford to purchase clothing of their own choice. Anne's remark that she had heard the donation was made

because the merchant could not make a profit selling it speaks to the upper hand that economically privileged people have in the matter of dress; those who can pay can determine the market and what it offers, while those who cannot must wear what is left over.

While Anne is portrayed as a passive wearer of clothing at the mercy of others' tastes and generosity, another of Montgomery's young heroines, Jane, is depicted as a much more active consumer of clothing in *Jane of Lantern Hill* (1937), which was published approximately thirty years after *Anne of Green Gables*. Jane enacts an active agency with regard to dress that seems to echo Montgomery's own sentiments on the modern girl. In 1924, Montgomery told reporters that "the present day girl [is] exactly like the girl of yesterday — the only difference being that the girls of today did what we of yesterday wanted to" (*SJLMM Vol. III* 208). Part of this change in experience, with regard to dress, can be attributed to increased industrialization and the resulting increased inclusion of girls within consumer culture. Strong-Boag describes this change: "The 1920s and 1930s also saw little girls, and children in general, being especially targeted [...] by increasingly powerful advertisers" (13). While Anne belongs to a rural environment that can still isolate itself from outside commercial influences, as noted by David and Wahl, Jane is more often positioned in an urban environment, surrounded by stores and shopping opportunities. It is important to note, however, that at times Jane is also present in rural Prince Edward Island, like Anne, but continues to exercise the independent characteristics that show her to be a very different girl from Anne.

Where Anne's story is one of finding belonging in a community, Jane's story revolves around leaving an unacceptable community in order to belong, almost immediately, to a new, more congenial one. Jane's story is thus one of gaining independence. *Jane of Lantern Hill* begins with Jane stuck in the stagnant and oppressive Kennedy mansion in Toronto under the

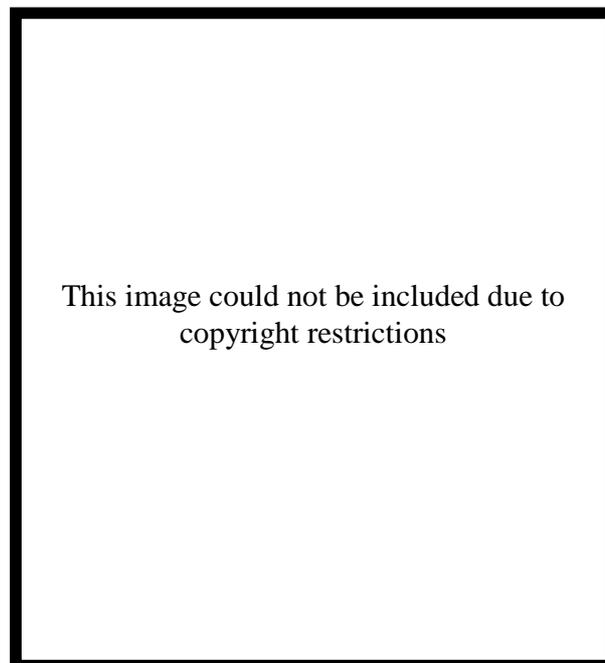
rule of her tyrannical grandmother. It is not until the unwelcome invitation arrives from her estranged father to join him on P.E.I. that Jane is allowed the opportunity to assert herself outside of the influence of grandmother and the various other negative aspects of Toronto. With her increased actualization, she changes from Victoria, or Jane Victoria, when in Toronto to Jane when in P.E.I. When Jane returns from her summer on P.E.I., she does not leave behind her newfound independence, but exerts its power in Toronto, transforming her environment, or her perception of it, as well as altering her relations with grandmother.

Elizabeth Epperly attributes Jane's independence to the "discovery of her own powers of creativity and control" (221) in the domestic realm once she is able to keep house for dad. However, I argue that Jane would not be able to enjoy this independence and control if she were not also able to feel emotionally independent from certain characters, such as grandmother and Aunt Irene. Jane does not have the same emotional needs that Anne has. Although she desires the love of her mother and father and enjoys the companionship of congenial friends, Jane does not strive to belong in the community the way that Anne does. Jane has occasional outbursts of "impertinence" (10) toward grandmother that, after a summer in P.E.I., become "something that was free and aloof ... something that was almost beyond grandmother's power to tame or hurt" (147). Jane does not actively isolate herself from her community, but she does express an emotional independence that allows her to assert power in the community. With her new attitude, Jane makes friends with her previously patronising cousin Phyllis (176), enjoys going to her exclusive private school where she becomes a leader, and makes a favourable impression on her extended family which can no longer intimidate her (199). And on the Island, although it is a new environment, Jane does not have to be careful to make a good impression on others the way Anne does in order to build relationships. She is simply herself at her most natural and feels

"friendly towards all the world" because she is "no longer rebuffed, frightened, awkward because she [is] frightened" (86). Jane never represses her true personality in P.E.I. except with her Aunt Irene, with whom Jane is reserved and unforthcoming. However, this repression is not born of desire for acceptance, but of an instinctive aversion towards Aunt Irene. Jane "keep[s] her own counsel" (65) with the prying and manipulative Aunt Irene, soon learning how to "fence herself against Aunt Irene by a sturdy little philosophy of her own" (128). Montgomery metaphorically describes Jane's way of dealing with people who would try to control her: "If [Aunt Irene] could have, she would have said that Jane looked at her and then, quietly and politely, shut some door of her soul in her face" (128). She protects herself and her independence in this way.

Jane's remarkable independence is echoed in her dressing and clothes-buying habits, although not at first. At the beginning of the novel grandmother chooses Jane's clothes. Grandmother buys Jane a dress for the school concert in "Marlborough's big department store" (39). It is significant that grandmother's purchase of the beautiful "dull green silk" dress that Jane "like[s] herself in" makes her "more anxious than ever to please grandmother with her recitation" (39). Thus, beautiful clothing that expresses something positive about the wearer, in this case Jane's positive feelings toward herself, can create the desire to build emotional bonds. It is not until Jane reaches Lantern Hill that she is able to assert her independence by choosing her own clothing, clothing that is suited to her chosen, rural life. Although grandmother has attempted to extend her influence over Jane while she is out of her reach by outfitting Jane with more clothes bought from Marlborough's, "very nice clothes [...] much nicer than she had ever had before" (50), Jane quickly discards these clothes as unsuited to her new life. She buys "some gingham dresses and aprons" because "none of the clothes grandmother had bought for her would be of any use at Lantern Hill" (79). Her independent re-outfitting is symbolic of Jane's embarking upon

a new life outside of the influence of her tyrannical grandmother. Grandmother recognizes this emotional separation when she asks Jane what she wore during the summer and Jane replies that she only wore one of the nice items, a green linen jumper (see Figure 1.2), because she "kept house for father" (145). Jane links her new, strong emotional ties to the discarding of old, tenuous ones, a fact that displeases grandmother because it removes her control over Jane: "Grandmother wiped her lips daintily with her napkin. It seemed as if she were wiping some disagreeable flavour off them" (145). The power struggles between Jane and grandmother result in Jane's assertion of independence and Jane's own choosing and purchasing of clothing.



**Figure 1.2: "Green Linen Jumper."** A sewing pattern for a jumper, the simple item of dress suited to Jane's life in rural P.E.I. (*Vintage Patterns Wikia*)

Jane's emotional independence is mirrored by her financial independence. Although she does not have her own financial resources at the beginning of the novel, "grandmother was feeding and clothing and educating her" (5), Jane manages to acquire money, even though she does not engage in paid labour outside the home and "[an] allowance was something Jane had never had" (152). Anne keeps her hands clean from handling money, but Jane receives cash from

each of her parents, a dollar from her mother (79) and fifty dollars from her father (198). More humorously, Jane acquires twenty-five dollars of reward money for capturing a tame lion that had escaped from a visiting circus (182-189). With such cash in hand Jane is free to spend this money as she chooses. She uses the money from her father to purchase ingredients to make a Christmas fruitcake for him and to ship it to the Island. Jane's self-assured independence is described by Montgomery: "She did not ask anyone's permission for all this ... just went ahead and did it. Mary [the cook] held her tongue and grandmother knew nothing about it. But Jane would have sent it just the same if she had" (201). In this case, Jane's financial independence is linked to her emotional independence. She uses her money as she chooses in order to please herself, without concerning herself with pleasing grandmother.

Jane is also able to determine how others spend their money. Part of the domestic control that Epperly remarks upon is financial. Jane is in charge of purchases for the P.E.I. household in her role as housekeeper for her father. Although the money belongs to her father, Jane tells him how to spend it: "you must get me a can of Flewell's Baking Powder at the Corners, dad" (93). Even in Toronto, Jane is able to influence the spending of money. Grandmother buys a Persian cat for Jane "costing seventy-five dollars and looking like the King of All Cats" in order "to wean Miss Victoria away from the Island" (154). Mary comments on the other purchases grandmother has made for Jane: "Look at the presents she give Miss Victoria this Christmas. As if to say, 'You couldn't get anything like *that* from your father!' [...] But she's met her match at last, or I'm much mistaken. She can't overcrowd Miss Victoria any longer and she's just beginning to find it out" (154). Jane's new, strong emotional ties to her estranged father, Andrew Stuart, her increased emotional distance from her family in Toronto, and grandmother's resulting lack of control over Jane are all resented by grandmother. Jane feels little enthusiasm for grandmother's

gifts, although she politely thanks grandmother for them, a lack commented upon by grandmother and Jane's mother. However, Jane does not feel compelled to express gratefulness at the expense of hiding her own emotions even though reliant on grandmother for economic benefits. Jane is far more happy living in the less affluent world of Lantern Hill, a different sort of financial independence than possessing money.

Jane's shopping experiences reflect her gradually increasing financial independence. Earlier in the novel, grandmother both chooses and pays for Jane's clothing for the concert and for Jane's trip to P.E.I. In these cases, the money associated with Jane's clothing tends to have an oppressive effect on her. When buying her school concert dress, Jane feels "smothered" in the luxurious department store, Marlborough's (39). The "panelled walls, velvety carpets and muted voices" (39) of the shop, all signs of wealth, are at odds with Jane's previously expressed desires to laugh (29) and to run (4), desires which she is able to indulge in the less-wealthy world of rural P.E.I. Similarly, the financial message which grandmother wishes to convey when dressing Jane for her Island trip, that she can afford to outfit Jane in a style which her father cannot afford nor her Aunt Irene criticise (50), only adds to Jane's generally unpleasant feelings about the trip. Jane's discomfort stems from the, perhaps unconscious, knowledge that she is a passive participant in the shopping experiences that are used by her grandmother for her own, self-serving purposes of conspicuous consumption and power assertions.

However, for Jane's second trip to the Island, the annual shopping experience takes on a new aspect; instead of grandmother picking and purchasing, Jane and her mother embark on a cooperative shopping trip in which they both have a say in which clothes Jane should wear:

Grandmother coldly told mother to buy what clothes ... if *any* ... were necessary for Jane.

Jane and mother had a happy afternoon's shopping. Jane picked her own things ... things

that would suit Lantern Hill and an Island summer. Mother insisted on some smart little knitted sweaters and one pretty dress of rose-pink organdy with delicious frills. Jane didn't know where she would ever wear it [...], but she let mother buy it to please her.

(166)

This shopping excursion is a happy occasion, in contrast with the oppressive shopping trips shared by Jane and grandmother. In this passage, the phrase "things that would suit Lantern Hill" acts as a euphemism for "things that would suit Jane," the new ideology behind Jane's clothes-shopping, as opposed to the earlier philosophy of buying clothes for Jane that would suit grandmother and her motivations. This assertion of self seems especially subversive because it uses grandmother's financial resources to make a purchase of which she obviously disapproves. Grandmother is no longer able to dictate so strictly the allocation of money within the household, at least where Jane is concerned.

Montgomery's portrayal of grandmother with regard to Jane is not the only problematic one with regard to mother figures and their influence over the clothing of their dependents; Montgomery frequently depicts mother figures as lacking understanding or unable to properly regulate their use of power, behaving either too tyrannically or too passively. However, her positive mother figures find some way of correcting these character flaws. Their flaws and transformations are mirrored by the way in which they clothe their daughters, heeding or ignoring their sartorial sensibilities. The complicated relationship between Jane's mother, Robin, and grandmother as well as the relationship between Marilla and Anne both display tense power interactions that must evolve in order to become fruitful.

Robin occupies a liminal position in the Kennedy household as both mother and daughter. She is less able than Jane to assert her independence. Although Epperly casts Jane in the role of a

princess trapped by a wicked witch (221), Robin seems more suited to the role of damsel in distress. However, instead of being rescued by a fairy-tale prince, Robin, like Jane, must find a way to rescue herself from the clutches of the wicked witch, grandmother. Robin's dependence, both emotional and financial, upon Jane and grandmother infantilizes her so that she is trapped in a perpetual dependent adolescence similar to Anne's. After leaving her own household with her husband, Robin returned to the house of her mother, resuming her role as daughter of the house and, in some ways, abandoning her role as mother as well as that of wife. Robin's character is described through the eyes of Jane: "Mother always gave way if you were firm enough. Jane had already discovered that. She adored mother but she had unerringly laid her finger on the weak spot in her character. Mother couldn't 'stand up to' people" (19). Grandmother, as the firmest character in the household, thus has the greatest influence over Robin.

It is not only weakness that causes Robin's lack of independence; Robin's love for her mother makes her acquiescent and yielding to grandmother's wishes. While love is often portrayed as a positive emotion in Montgomery's works, an emotion that can create and cement familial and communal bonds, the love between Robin and her mother is characterized as unhealthy and even poisonous. Mary tells Jane about a dog that Robin used to own: "Mary did not tell Jane that she firmly believed the old lady had poisoned the dog. You didn't tell children things like that, and anyway, she couldn't be sure dead sure of it. All she was sure of was that old Mrs. Kennedy had been bitterly jealous of her daughter's love for the dog" (31). This co-dependent relationship between Robin and grandmother creates a number of problems and dysfunction within the community. Grandmother's fierce jealousy of Robin's love causes her to manipulate and lie in order to prevent Robin developing relationships with others. Robin's dependence on her mother's love causes her to halt her maturation and allows the emotional

abuse of Jane. Robin restrains her protestations against grandmother's abusive treatment of Jane. Although the reader is told, "The only times she ever dared to contradict grandmother were in defence of Jane" (29), such defences are given "falter[ingly]" (29) and more often Robin remains silent as grandmother deals with Jane harshly and tyrannically, as in "the incident of the kitten, the mysterious affair of Kenneth Howard's picture, and the unlucky recitation" (29).

As a woman permanently trapped in the role of adolescent daughter, Robin is unable to simultaneously uphold her role as mother to Jane. Instead, their roles are reversed and Jane becomes the caregiver, so that Robin is doubly a daughter: to her mother and to her own daughter. Jane's determined silence after her return to Toronto on subjects that might hurt her mother demonstrates the reversal of roles: "Jane had begun to feel curiously protective about mother ... as if, somehow, she must be shielded and guarded" (149). This silent protection becomes even more telling when Robin tells Jane her side of the story of her marriage and estrangement while Jane's silent commentary runs throughout. Robin's monologue reveals her lack of understanding and judgement with regard to others, while Jane's inner dialogue shows her mature grasp of the various situations Robin describes. It is also interesting to note that part of Robin's marriage trouble was that she worried she was too "young and foolish" (203) to make a good wife. Jane seems to second this opinion; "*And you were just a darling big baby yourself, mother,*" she thinks to herself when Robin mentions the infant Jane and her part in the marriage trouble (204). Another character also implies that Robin's potential childishness caused problems. Little Aunt Em reveals to Jane the role that Aunt Irene had in her parents' separation:

Your pa and ma had their ups and downs, of course, but it was Irene put the sting into them, wagging that smooth tongue of hers ... 'She's only a child, 'Drew' ... when your dad was wanting to believe he'd married a woman, not a child ... 'You're so young, lovey'

... when your ma was feeling scared she'd never be old and wise enough for your pa.

(124)

Robin's unnaturally prolonged adolescence causes an inability to maintain mature emotional bonds as well as prevents Robin from maintaining the independent household she has built away from her mother. It is not until Robin reasserts herself in the role of mother that she is able to free herself from the unhealthy influence of grandmother. Robin leaves Toronto to be by Jane's bedside at the climax of the novel. Jane has contracted pneumonia during a sudden return trip to the Island to learn whether or not her father plans to divorce Robin in order to marry another woman. Grandmother attempts to keep Robin by her, but Robin finally learns "to be wise" (215) and leave behind the harmful relationship that has kept her too long a child. Her way of escape from the evil spell that has held her in perpetual childhood is to reassert her independence as an adult and take up the consequent responsibilities.

Avoidance of the adult role of motherhood in exchange for an unnatural childhood is not the only choice that causes Robin to be dependent upon her mother. Robin, growing up as a daughter in a wealthy upper-middle-class household, has never had to engage in a career or life's work. As a result, Robin is financially dependent. While a lack of income may be permissible in a child, as in the case of Anne, Robin's financial dependence reflects badly on her, especially contrasted with Jane's ability to control economic resources. Little Aunt Em remarks that Robin was "spoiled" and "always had everything she wanted," but that grandmother is the one who obtained "everything" for her (124), a pattern that continues throughout the majority of the novel.

In many ways, grandmother treats Robin like a doll, a pretty possession that she can own and dress up. Robin passively accepts and dresses in all the beautiful, expensive clothes that her

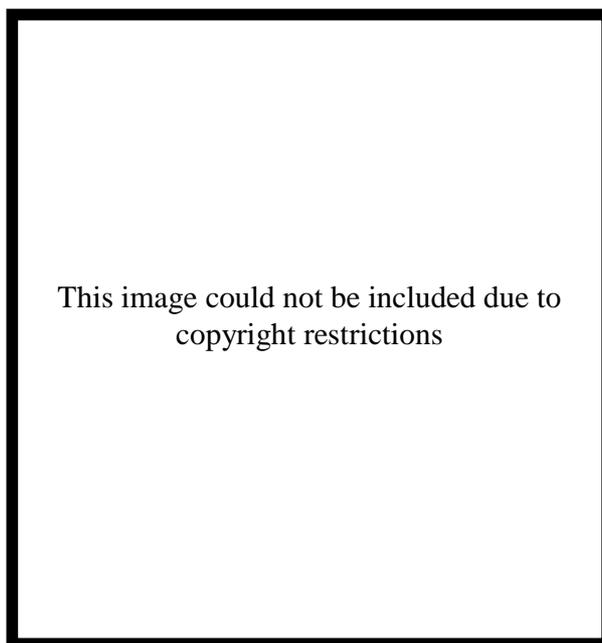
mother buys for her. A telling passage from Jane's point of view, but with commentary from the narrator, reveals the problem with all these clothes:

Grandmother was always giving mother such lovely things. And she picked out all her clothes for her ... wonderful dresses and hats and wraps. Jane did not know that people said Mrs. Stuart was always rather overdressed, but she had an idea that mother really liked simpler clothes and only pretended to like better the gorgeous things grandmother bought for her for fear of hurting grandmother's feelings. (7)

Robin suppresses her own tastes in order to please her mother and her mother is able to exert her control over Robin by picking out clothing according to her wishes, disregarding those of Robin. This lack of independence on the part of Robin brings the censure of the community down upon her. By maintaining her emotionally co-dependent relationship with her mother, symbolized by the passive wearing of the clothes picked out by grandmother, she rejects building other, healthier, emotional relationships with the community. Instead, as stated above, Robin abandons her roles as wife and mother, as well as avoids close relationships with non-family members. Her friendship with Little Aunt Em has not been maintained. And, although she attends a number of social functions, she flits from one function to another like the butterfly she is often compared to (5). The absence of any names of Robin's friends or descriptions of them, with the very slight mention of a vague Mrs. Kirby whom grandmother tells Robin to avoid (44), speaks to their lack of intimacy with Robin. Robin's relationships, like her clothes, are dictated by grandmother.

It is not only what Robin wears that is problematic, but how much of it she wears. The numerous descriptions of her clothing (7, 26, 40, 42, 143, 202) show Robin to be burdened, almost suffocated, by the sheer amount of laces, velvets, furs, and diamonds that she is always wearing (see Figure 1.3). It is as though Robin is trapped in a portable Marlborough's; the

oppressive atmosphere that Jane notes in the department store seems to be carried around on Robin's back. These clothes are always obviously expensive and also always purchased by grandmother. Although Anne receives all of her clothing as gifts purchased by others, the same stigma of oppressiveness does not seem to be attached to them, perhaps, in part, because they come from the obviously middle-income Cuthberts; Anne's clothes are nice, but not excessively decadent. Robin's clothes are an ostentatious display of wealth and ownership; grandmother is able to communicate her possession of great financial resources and of Robin through Robin's dress, perhaps using this form of communication to deter others from attempting to build relationships with Robin. If ponderous gifts imply ownership of the recipient, it is no wonder that Andrew Stuart objected to the "presents" and "money" grandmother used to send to Robin when she was still living on the Island with him.



**Figure 1.3: "Fur Collar."** This sewing pattern shows a coat with a large, heavy fur collar that covers the shoulders and dwarfs the body. A coat that Robin might wear. (*Vintage Patterns Wikia*)

While one may wonder if Robin leaves behind her wardrobe when she rushes off to P.E.I. to start her new life away from her mother, thus exhibiting emotional independence, it is unlikely

that Robin ever finds a way to become financially independent and able to purchase her own clothing. Ramsay Cook and Wendy Mitchinson remark, "The prejudice against women working essentially pertained only to married women; it was permissible for single women to work, but only until marriage," also observing that in Canada "as late as 1941 less than 4 per cent of married women were employed" (166). Having moved from the position of dependent daughter to dependent wife twice without break, Robin never has the opportunity to experience the financial independence that many young women did and that Jane likely will.

Although she is not employed in the paid labour force, nor is she a biological mother, Marilla engages in meaningful work that allows her to be independent and take on the role of mother. Marilla's work at Green Gables as both housekeeper and cook makes her an important and necessary part of the household. Her active role on the farm, where she keeps the house and yard spotlessly clean (*AGG* 42) and even lends a hand with certain farm activities like milking the cows (95), is very different from Robin's in the Kennedy household where Robin "never did anything except arrange the flowers for the table when they had company and light the candles for dinner" (*JLH* 10). Marilla may not directly be a wage earner, but her labour contributes to the ability of the farm to produce and, as a result, Marilla and Matthew engage in a partnership with equal footing. Marilla has control over affairs in the house and she leaves the management of the farm to Matthew. While little mention is made of Marilla's dress, it seems likely that she dresses according to her own tastes and ideas without any input from Matthew. It is through her unassisted outfitting of Anne that Marilla's tastes in clothing are revealed; she prefers "good, sensible, serviceable dresses" (*AGG* 127-128). Marilla's focus is on economy: she buys fabric that is for sale "at a bargain counter" (127) and wants dresses to be "serviceable" or long-wearing. The few items of clothing that Montgomery describes Marilla as wearing are her best clothes,

good quality items such as a brown satin dress (198) and a black lace shawl (156). It is interesting to note that Irene Gammel, discussing Montgomery's choice of colour for Anne's puffed sleeve dress, writes of the colour brown as part of "the era's fashionably earthy color palate [sic]" (180), but Marilla's choice to wear brown seems to imply that it is a practical colour, one unlikely to go in and out of fashion.

When Anne joins the family, Marilla attempts to uphold her absolute agency over the household, claiming, "Perhaps an old maid doesn't know much about bringing up a child, but I guess she knows more than an old bachelor. So you [Matthew] just leave me to manage her" (96). She has taken on the role of mother to Anne as a duty, not because she feels the sort of emotional connection with her that Matthew does, and thus exercises her power as a mother figure by imposing her tastes on Anne who prefers "pretty" clothes to those that are just "neat and clean and new" (127). However, this power imbalance cannot be sustained as Marilla learns to care for Anne and Anne takes on an essential role in the household equal to that of Marilla and Matthew. Doody links equality and emotional bonding, stating, "It is a significant sign of their equality that Marilla refuses to have Anne call her either 'Miss Cuthbert' or 'Aunt Marilla.' Unconsciously farsighted, Marilla repudiates social formality and class distinctions [...] while also fending off fake family ties — as an aunt she would not be as close to Anne as she actually becomes" (26). Anne's tastes and desires later influence the clothes that Marilla and Matthew provide for her. Anne tells Diana that "Marilla always makes my dresses fashionably now, because she says she doesn't intend to have Matthew going to Mrs. Lynde to make them" (306). While Marilla is willing to compromise on the style of clothing that Anne wears, she is against abdicating the role of mother figure to Mrs. Lynde; she insists on keeping the maternal power of ultimately determining what her child will wear.

In Montgomery's fiction, beautiful clothing helps build and sustain emotional ties, particularly familial ones. An excess of beautiful clothes, either too many clothes or ones that are too expensive, however, reveal unhealthy emotional bonds that are burdensome and oppressive. Montgomery's happiest female characters, those that seem the most fulfilled and emotionally satisfied, are those who are able to find some sort of work, either in life or in the labour force, which allows them to be independent and active, reflecting Montgomery's own sense of accomplishment as a wage-earner. These characters are able to engage in non-verbal self-expression through dress by choosing clothes that suit themselves and their own aesthetic sensibilities, both independently and cooperatively with female family members. Other, less independent, characters are also able temporarily to find happiness and agency through beautiful dress and its transformative abilities, showing the power that dress has to alter lives and power relations in Montgomery's fictional worlds.

## Chapter Two: Visibility, Vanity, and Change

It is a curious fact — that when I am badly upset in mind, worried and nervous, I always feel *dirty and dishevelled* — as if I were physically unclean and untidy. I was not — I was neatly and carefully and quietly dressed, but I felt like the veriest drab and shrank from the eyes of every passerby as if he must notice and wonder over my unkemptness.

(*SJLMM Vol. II* 330)

As can be seen from the above quote, the visual and psychological aspects of dress were important concerns for L.M. Montgomery. Montgomery was invested in appearing well-dressed and many of her characters share this concern. Penny Storm answers the question, "Why should we be interested in dressing to enhance our appearance?": "The most likely reason is a combination of two factors: by making ourselves more socially attractive to others we will (1) be more acceptable to them and (2) increase our self-confidence" (6). Dress is thus a social activity, one that occurs under the watchful eye of others, for the benefit of others as well as the wearer. Without the visual participation of others, dressing well has little meaning; while as visibility increases, dress grows more important. Dress also has an emotional effect on both the wearer and those who observe the wearer in its ability to evoke positive feelings.

In Montgomery's time, women were becoming more visible in the public sphere. As they entered new fields such as post-secondary education, politics, and business, women were put in the public eye. Their rarity in these fields and the controversy arising from their entrance into them made these women conspicuous. A 1918 article describing the new "street railway conductorettes" in Kingston used in the absence of men during World War I remarks on the pessimism of some old men regarding these new hires (Light and Parr 217). The article also goes on to describe their "natty khaki suits:" "Each girl is provided with the material for two uniforms,

a peaked, brown straw cap sitting at a jaunty angle on her head under which her hair is neatly tucked [...]. Their suits are quite plain, consisting of a short skirt and Norfolk coat with shining brass buttons. [...] They are very business-like in appearance [...]" (218). Beth Light and Joy Parr note, "As Canadian women assumed larger roles in the public sphere of society, some began to seek more comfortable and mobile attire" (228). While the "conductorette" uniforms are practical with their "short skirts" and "business-like appearance," the inclusion of words such as "natty" and "jaunty" in their description also speak to the attractiveness of the uniforms. The Oxford English Dictionary connects these terms with concepts of smartness, fashionableness, and even gentility (n.p.). These women knew the importance of looking attractive and well-bred in order to be accepted by the public in their new roles. Montgomery's female characters are equally adept at navigating changing circumstances. Montgomery portrays them as finding ways to become well-dressed, socially acceptable, and sexually attractive modern women as they face or enact change and the conflict it brings.

While most of Montgomery's works may be considered part of the genre of domestic realism, in which "the main engagement is always with the development and interplay of characters in a family or neighbourhood setting" (Foster and Simons 4), Montgomery often depicts her female characters leaving the private, domestic sphere and making forays into a wider, more public, world. Montgomery's fiction shows ideological conflict between characters who uphold earlier, more traditional conceptions of moral femininity and characters who depict a new femininity in which public display of oneself is morally acceptable and, at times, even admirable. Characters who ensure they are well-dressed reap the benefits of their appearance through the positive treatment from others as well as feelings of self-esteem and self-confidence. The concept of feminine visual display in the twentieth century also brings with it the idea of

sexuality and sexual attractiveness, as well as anxieties about aging and losing sexual appeal. Montgomery's female characters strive to dress in a way that portrays them as sexually viable partners in a world in which marriage still plays an important role.

The late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries were a time in which women became an increasingly visible presence outside of the domestic sphere. Ramsay Cook and Wendy Mitchinson document through contemporary texts this time when "more and more women were entering the work force" (167), "women started demanding entrance into the institutions of higher learning" (119), and "women had a bit more time to become involved in activities outside the home" and to participate in the suffrage movement (256). Montgomery's own work and celebrity also put her in the public eye. After the publication and widespread success of *Anne of Green Gables*, Montgomery made a highly publicized trip to visit her publisher, L.C. Page, in Boston. In her diary, Montgomery writes, "That night there was a notice in the *Herald* that I was in Boston and thenceforth I was besieged with invitations and telephone calls" (*CJLMM 1901-1911* 326). These invitations were to dinners, luncheons, and receptions at which Montgomery was frequently interviewed by reporters for the *Herald*, the *Post*, the *Traveller*, and the *Republic*. Montgomery records a number of her dress purchases for and during this trip, including her first evening dress, and they are later reported on by the journalists. Montgomery writes, "In the article which came out next day he [the *Post* reporter] described me as wearing a gown which 'shimmered and dazzled.' And me in that quiet little old-rose frock!" (328). Montgomery's appearance was important not only because the reporters would describe it, but also because photographs often accompanied these articles, visually documenting her appearance. Her various high-profile engagements, such as her meetings with Earl Grey (306) and HRH The Prince of Wales (*SJLMM Vol. III* 351), were occasions for Montgomery to dress up and wear pretty

clothing, much of which she documented in her own writing and photographs. Although newspaper descriptions commented on her visible signs of a creative mind such as "imaginative" features (*CJLMM 1901-1911* 328), much was also made of her delicate looks, "her gentleness and marked femininity of aspect" (329); Montgomery's appearance as a woman garnered just as much attention as her appearance as an author. Celebrity put Montgomery on a highly visible stage, prompting her to create a particular public appearance as a successful, but feminine, well-dressed woman.

Many of Montgomery's female characters also find themselves in situations that put them in the public eye as they enter new circumstances. In *Anne of Green Gables* (1908), Anne's first venture into Avonlea society takes the form of attending Sunday School. As the newest member of Avonlea society and, as an adopted orphan, an object of further curiosity, Anne is put under public scrutiny among her peers: "In the porch [Anne] found a crowd of little girls [...] all staring with curious eyes at this stranger in their midst" (*AGG* 129). On her way alone to Sunday School, Anne has adorned her hat with "a heavy wreath" of buttercups and wild roses (129), making herself a visual spectacle. Marilla later reprimands Anne for making herself look "ridiculous" (135). While it is never clearly explained how, in some way Anne has broken an Avonlea social code with her adornment. Diana Crane states, "Both in Europe and America, women in the nineteenth century were required to dress according to the dominant fashion on the streets and in other people's homes" (114). Crane goes on to remark, "Tennis, croquet, ice skating, and golf were perceived as social rather than sports activities (Bulger 1982:6). Consequently, in the 1870s, women were expected to dress for these sports as they dressed for other social occasions: long skirts with trains, tight corsets, bustles, and large hats (McCrone 1988:219, 232)" (114). Social and public places, where one could be seen by others who were not close friends or family, were

thus environments in which one was expected to dress in a conventional way. Although perhaps permissible to wear in her treks through the woods alone, Anne's wreath of flowers is too unconventional for the public sphere of Sunday School and is therefore inappropriate. Part of Anne's education in belonging is learning how to dress appropriately and becomingly in public spaces.

After this occasion, Anne dresses in a cooperative fashion, gaining the input of others in order to determine what is appropriate to wear in public. When attending the Avonlea Debating Club concert, which is considered "a big affair" (215), Anne and Diana dress for it together, arranging each other's hair carefully. However, Anne is aware that she does not have the same visual effect that the well-dressed Diana does: "Anne could not help a little pang when she contrasted her plain black tam and shapeless, tight-sleeved, home-made gray cloth coat with Diana's jaunty fur cap and smart little jacket" (216). While Anne is not improperly dressed, her plain, unbecoming clothing is not stylish or conventional enough for her to feel comfortable in the public eye. When Anne and Diana go to an even greater event, the Charlottetown Exhibition, Anne is more properly attired for such a grand occasion. Anne has a "jaunty new cap and jacket" (307) "made by a real dressmaker over at Carmody" (306) as well as a new, fashionable dress made by Marilla, who is influenced by Matthew and Mrs. Lynde, to wear in the city. The need to appear "jaunty" becomes important in its connotation of being "well-bred" (Oxford English Dictionary n.p.); a well-bred girl understands the social dictate of being appropriately, or conventionally, dressed for the public. The greater the number of people who may be gazing at her, the more important Anne's dress becomes.

Even well into the twentieth century the strictures described by Crane are still in effect; in *Jane of Lantern Hill* (1937), Jane is careful to dress appropriately in public spaces like the street.

When Jane's cousin Phyllis is visiting Jane on the Island, car trouble prevents her parents from picking her up. Jane volunteers to walk Phyllis back to the hotel, but Phyllis objects to Jane's clothing:

She looked at Jane's overalls.

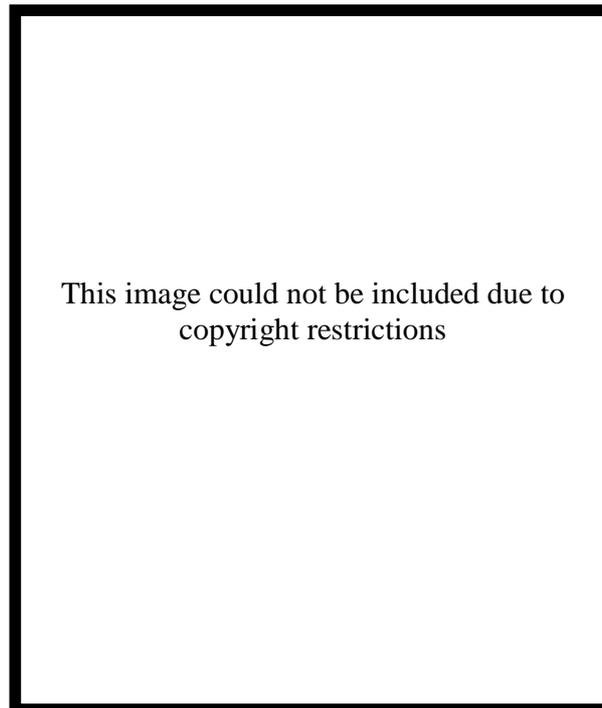
"Are you going in *them*?"

"No, I only wear these around home," explained Jane patiently. "I was driving hay all the forenoon. [...] I'll change in a jiffy and we'll start."

Jane slipped into a skirt and one of her pretty sweaters and fluffed a comb through her russet hair. People were beginning to look twice at Jane's hair. (175)

In this passage, both Phyllis and Jane recognize that overalls, although acceptable for visiting with close family and for wear at home, are inappropriate for the street or hotel where strangers may see her. Jane not only changes into pretty and conventional clothing, but also takes the time to fix her hair, an aspect of Jane's appearance that the narrator informs us is often looked at. The possibility of society's gaze influences Jane's behaviour and dress.

It is also made clear in the above passage that there are certain unconventional activities for which it is permissible to wear what Crane terms "alternative dress" (114), widely worn styles that differ from fashionable dress because of their masculine influence (see Figure 2.1), and that these activities can change over time. Anne, in her earlier setting, is prohibited from helping Matthew with the farming, a task for which they must employ the hired boy, Jerry Buote (AGG 82). However, Jane is able to drive hay and do other farm work such as shingling a barn (JLH 181). For these activities Jane wears her overalls, an article of clothing that is never referenced in *Anne of Green Gables* as potential women's wear.



**Figure 2.1: "Up and Doing." A page from a catalogue from 1937 showing pants with an emphasis on physical activity in the title. Jane is allowed to wear such masculine clothes during particular activities. (*Wearing History Blog*)**

While there are certain activities for which beautiful dress becomes less important, Montgomery also has her characters engage in activities where dress becomes exceptionally important, such as performing on stage. In such situations, the performing female character becomes the focal point of visual attention for the audience. Diana lavishes attention on Anne's appearance when they are dressing for the White Sands Hotel concert: "All her pains were bestowed upon Anne, who, she vowed, must, for the credit of Avonlea, be dressed and combed and adorned to the queen's taste" while her own appearance is "of minor importance" because she will only be an audience member (349). Jane and Anne both participate in school concerts, as did Montgomery herself when a student. On these occasions, dress becomes something that is deliberated on in order to show the girls to their advantage. Grandmother buys Jane "a very pretty dress" for the concert, made of a "dull green silk that brought out the russet glow of Jane's hair and the gold-brown of her eyes" (39). The emphasis is placed on the visual effect of the

gown and the play of colour between the clothing and the wearer. The importance of the visual is even more pronounced in the description of the following year's school concert. Jane participates in a tableau, wearing "maple leaves in her russet hair" in her role as the spirit of autumn (152). The silent spectacle of the tableau promotes the visual over the other senses. Afterward, Jane's looks are remarked upon by "a lady," presumably a member of the audience, who says that "there is something very striking about her face" (152). The school concert becomes an opportunity for Jane to be put on display, to be gazed at and judged by her society.

For Jane's school, the annual school concert seems to be a well-established tradition; in the Avonlea school it is an innovation. It is important for the Avonlea scholars to acquit themselves well because their performance will reflect upon Miss Stacy, who is herself an innovation in Avonlea because she is the first female school teacher there. Mrs. Lynde regards the hiring of a female teacher as "a dangerous innovation" (AGG 249) and Marilla is sceptical of Miss Stacy's implementation of Friday recitations, field afternoons, and physical culture exercises (260-261). A successful concert has the ability to legitimize Miss Stacy's methods to Avonlea society. Part of performing well at the school concert involves being well-dressed. Anne plans on borrowing Ruby Gillis' slippers for the dialogue, *The Fairy Queen*, because, as Anne says, "It's necessary for fairies to have slippers, you know. You couldn't imagine a fairy wearing boots, could you? Especially with copper toes?" (262). The success of the dialogue relies upon having the appropriate dress, including footwear, to make the correct sensory effects; thus it really is "providential" that Anne receives slippers from Josephine Barry as a gift because, as Diana states, Ruby's slippers are "two sizes too big [...] and it would be awful to hear a fairy shuffling" (274). The sensory aspects of dress are particularly important in this highly public display; Anne remarks on the visual, while Diana stresses the auditory. Anne is quite enthusiastic

about the visual spectacle they will make and the costumes involved: "I'm to have a wreath of white roses on my hair [...]. And we are all to march in two by two after the audience is seated, while Emma White plays a march on the organ" (262). Anne thrills to the idea of being on-stage in front of an audience. In contrast, Marilla disapproves of the entire affair; she states, "I don't approve of children's getting up concerts and racing about to practices. It makes them vain and forward and fond of gadding" (261).

Marilla's reasons for disapproval align her with an earlier way of thinking, one which associates on-stage public display with immorality, which Montgomery explores in another one of her stories, "Their Girl Josie" (1906). "Their Girl Josie" begins with the description of the marriage of lawyer Paul Morgan to actress Elinor Ashton, a marriage disapproved of by old friends and neighbours from Morgan's hometown, Spring Valley. The narrator describes the thoughts of Paul's parents: "To Cyrus and Deborah Morgan, brought up and nourished all their lives on the strictest and straightest of old-fashioned beliefs both as regards this world and that which is to come, this was a tragedy" ("Josie" 147). Acting is regarded as an immoral profession by the old-fashioned people of rural Spring Valley. Josie, the daughter of Paul and Elinor, is adopted by Cyrus and Deborah when she is orphaned in hopes that they can eradicate the "taint" (147) of acting transferred to her by her mother and encouraged by her mother's sister, Annice. Josie receives gifts from Annice that Cyrus and Deborah associate with the acting profession, "painted fans and lace frills and beflounced lingerie," which are considered "dainty, frivolous trifles" (148-149). The frivolity and vanity, as well as the display of sexuality which I will address below, that are thought to be implicit in stage acting bring the charge of immorality against those who practice it.

The sin of vanity is one which girls are often portrayed as being particularly susceptible to in the nineteenth century. Foster and Simons remark, "Distinctions between 'right' and 'wrong' behaviour are still the central concern in most of the narratives" of the latter part of the century (8). They also state, "While rejecting the doctrinaire didacticism of much children's literature, Montgomery herself encountered the constraints of publication which insisted on the ethical orientation of children's literature" (158). Montgomery both follows and deviates from the traditions of her authorial predecessors in her portrayals of the potential problems of vanity and their relation to dress, in some ways even advocating for the appropriateness of vanity. In one of her short stories, the narrator declares that "vanity is the last thing to desert a properly constructed woman" ("The Revolt of Mary Isabel" 239), a comment that both associates vanity with womanhood and undermines its negative connotations.

Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868), which Montgomery herself read (*CJLMM 1889-1900* 457, Berg 38) and with whose author Montgomery was often compared by critics (*SJLMM Vol. IV* 40), provides the most pertinent example of old-fashioned ideologies connected with vanity and dress. In the chapter "Meg Goes to Vanity Fair," Meg March visits her wealthy friends, the Moffats, for a fortnight and attends a small party and a ball. The chapter begins with the girls packing up Meg's "nice things" (Alcott 78) that they've helped make, bought, or lent, during which process Meg expresses wishes for a number of dress items that she does not possess: a silk dress, a low-necked ball dress, a silk umbrella, real lace, and bows on her nightcaps (78-79). At the small party, Meg feels some initial dissatisfaction comparing her gown with her wealthy friends' pretty, light dresses, but eventually recovers upon receiving a note from her mother that acts "as a sort of talisman against, envy, vanity, and false pride" (81). When the ball arrives, Meg takes up the offer to be dressed by one of the Moffat girls, Belle, and wear an

old silk dress of Belle's instead of re-wearing her own gown. The dress is "so tight [Meg] could hardly breathe and so low in the neck that modest Meg blushed at herself in the mirror" (84). When confronted by Laurie, who disapproves of all of the "fuss and feathers," Meg expresses the wish that she had "been sensible and worn [her] own things" (87). Meg later confesses to her mother and resolves to be "sentimental or dissatisfied" (90) no longer. Meg's lesson is learned: vanity, in the form of caring much about pretty and fashionable dress, is a sin to be shunned and will not bring worthwhile happiness.

The lesson of this chapter seems to partake of the same code of morals held by Marilla and the Morgan grandparents. Marilla's language in her comment that the dresses she has made for Anne are "sensible" and "without any frills and furbelows about them" (*AGG* 127-128) echoes Meg's regret that she had not been "sensible" and that she had allowed others to adorn her with "fuss and feathers." Marilla's remark on puffed sleeves being "as big as balloons" in conjunction with her criticism of Matthew's purchase of Anne's puffed sleeve dress because it will "pamper Anne's vanity" (271) conflates the air-filled puffed sleeves with empty, puffed-up vanity, the vanity of the life the Moffats live. The Morgans' response to finding Josie dressed up in a makeshift costume and practising lines from a play is similar. Josie's "costume" consists of a "trailing, clinging black skirt" and "a silken shawl" that leaves "her beautiful arms and shoulders [...] bare" ("Josie" 150), reminiscent of Meg's silk dress with its long train and low neck. Cyrus calls it "indecent" (151) (recalling Meg's conclusion that Laurie thought that her dress "wasn't proper" (Alcott 89)) demanding that she take off her "rig" ("Josie" 152) and deciding that he and Deborah need to be stricter with Josie. Display, either of finery or of flesh, is associated with immorality and indecency, but this moral code is challenged by Montgomery as something that is not only old-fashioned, but outdated.

While Alcott teaches that girls should care less about dress, Montgomery advocates caring about being well-dressed. Foster and Simons discuss the way in which "Montgomery comically rewrites a key episode in *Little Women* in which Anne, having turned her offending red hair green instead of black with a defective dye, is forced to cut it off" instead of cutting it off to "sell it to get money for some good deed" as Jo does (156-157); Montgomery also rewrites Alcott's lesson about clothing and vanity. Meg's dissatisfaction with her clothing is gently reprimanded by the author through Beth's quiet comment that Meg had said she'd be "perfectly happy" with just being able to go on the visit. In contrast, when Anne expresses her disappointment that the dresses from Marilla are not pretty, the author portrays her sympathetically, a poor "little orphan girl" (AGG 128) disappointed in her hopes for her first pretty dress, and with a touch of humour, Anne's melodramatic talk of the "thrill" puffed sleeves would give her. Josie's story reads as a reversal of Meg's story, in which visual display is rewarded instead of reprimanded, and the keepers of old-fashioned morals, the grandparents, are proven wrong. Following their altercation, Josie leaves her grandparents' house to live with her actress aunt and is shown to be justified in her dissatisfaction with their old-fashioned morals when she takes to the stage and becomes a success. After seeing her on-stage, Cyrus tells Deborah, "I'm going to tell [Josie] she was right and we were wrong" ("Josie" 157); he learns that public display need not be immoral. Montgomery moves away from older models that associate clothing with vanity and invites the reader to challenge the outdated way of thinking as well. When Anne candidly asks Diana, "Do you suppose it's wrong for us to think so much about our clothes? Marilla says it is very sinful. But it *is* such an interesting subject, isn't it?" (306), the reader, having followed Anne's wardrobe transformations, is inclined to agree with Anne that it *is* "an interesting subject" and, perhaps, not so sinful as Marilla thinks.

Many of Montgomery's characters show that models that associate fine clothing with immoral vanity are no longer useful. Anne claims, "It is ever so much easier to be good if your clothes are fashionable. At least, it is easier for me. I suppose it doesn't make such a difference to naturally good people" (306). However, even the people that Anne considers "naturally good" are portrayed wearing fashionable and beautiful clothing. Mrs. Allen, the minister's wife, is often described as being beautifully dressed (234, 247) as well as morally upstanding. Miss Stacy is another character who "dresses beautifully" (257) while providing a good female moral model; the narrator remarks on "Miss Stacy's tactful, careful, broad-minded guidance" (330). These two women provide examples of beautiful clothing associated with moral goodness. Interestingly, Mrs. Lynde observes that thwarting the desire for pretty clothes can possibly even have a negative effect on moral character: "I suppose [Marilla's] trying to cultivate a spirit of humility in Anne by dressing her as she does; but it's more likely to cultivate envy and discontent" (270). From Alcott's time to Montgomery's the perception of clothing in relation to concepts of vanity and immorality seems to have reversed, with Montgomery advocating for the usefulness of beautiful clothing in promoting moral goodness instead considering it a hindrance.

Clothing is viewed positively by Montgomery, not only for its potentially moral qualities, but also because of the emotions it can create in the wearer when the clothing is visually pleasing. Storm's observation that adornment can "increase our self-confidence" (6) holds true for Montgomery and her female characters. Montgomery was deeply aware of her appearance and strongly invested in appearing well-dressed. In her journal she writes, "I am very fond of pretty dresses, hats and jewels and cannot enjoy myself if I do not feel well-dressed. I don't like to be in any company where anyone is better dressed. I do not feel happy when I am *alone* if I am not prettily dressed" (*SJLMM Vol. II* 393). While emotional stress could make Montgomery feel

badly dressed (330), pretty clothing could help Montgomery to feel emotionally uplifted. Storm states, "Dress can boost our confidence and thereby temporarily enhance our self-esteem. Clothes become valuable when they have a positive effect upon us" (267-268). Even Marilla, suspicious as she is toward the potentially sinful nature of clothing, is not immune to the positive emotional effect of clothing. When wearing her precious amethyst brooch, Marilla experiences a "pleasant consciousness of their violet shimmer at her throat, above her good brown satin dress" (AGG 148). Although Marilla cares little for being fashionable, scorning "ridiculous-looking" puffed sleeves (128), she is still concerned with her appearance in public places; she dresses up in "brown satin" for church and wears "her best black lace shawl" (156) to the Ladies' Aid meeting. Being well-dressed can thus be considered as dependent upon how it makes the wearer feel and what the wearer thinks of his or her own appearance, rather than the sartorial rules of others as to what constitutes pretty or fashionable clothing.

Montgomery's characters are often kept in states of low self-esteem by ugly clothing, but find confidence when they wear pretty clothing. Anne feels discomfort when wearing clothes that she thinks are ugly. She remarks on feeling "so ashamed" when leaving the orphanage in her "horrid old wincey dress" and adds, "When we got on the train I felt as if everybody must be looking at me and pitying me" (AGG 54). Anne, feeling herself to be poorly dressed, imagines herself to be attracting negative visual attention, which further reinforces the poor self-image originally caused by the dress. It is no wonder, then, that Anne craves beautiful clothing like a "white dress" (54). Such pretty clothing would grant Anne confidence and self-esteem and would allow her to forget her unwanted, orphan status. When Anne finally does receive her puffed-sleeve dress, she becomes "the bright particular star" (274) of the school concert. She attributes her success to her dress saying, "Oh, I was so nervous, Diana. [...] I felt as if a million eyes were

looking at me and through me, and for one dreadful moment I was sure I couldn't begin at all. Then I thought of my lovely puffed sleeves and took courage. I knew that I must live up to those sleeves, Diana" (275). The puffed sleeves brace up Anne emotionally and enable her to acquit herself well in the public eye.

In *The Blue Castle* (1926), Valancy experiences a similar change from pitiful and poorly-dressed to confident and well-dressed. When she puts on her "dress of brown gingham, thick, black stockings and rubber-heeled boots" and then does her hair in the mirror, she pulls up the blind in order to "see herself as the world saw her" and finds it to be "rather dreadful" (12). She thinks herself "neither pretty nor ugly — just insignificant-looking" (12); Valancy both looks and feels insignificant in her snuff-brown dresses. Her green dress and hat transform Valancy; she becomes a woman in love, "no longer unimportant" (111), the night she wears them. At the same time Valancy becomes "provocative, fascinating" (117) in the eyes of her cousin, Olive, with her "little hat with its crimson rose [...] tilted down over one eye" (116). Pretty clothing enables Valancy to embody the qualities she was too cowed or afraid to act out before. These positive emotional effects facilitate Montgomery's characters' abilities to deal with new situations or to move them out of old, negative ones. While the emotional effect of clothing is an important aspect in determining whether or not a character feels well-dressed, it is not the only criterion.

Fashion can also play a role in helping characters to feel well-dressed and confident because of its connections with the modern and contemporary. Alison Matthews David and Kimberly Wahl remark on the confluence of "modern fashionability and [...] social empowerment" (39) with regard to Anne's much-desired puffed sleeves. Montgomery distances her characters from the past not only by re-writing earlier stories, but also by aligning them with modern aesthetic sensibilities. Montgomery herself was highly aware of changing fashions and

often remarked on fashions that had passed: "I remember in the 90's we laughed at the bustles of the 80's and the crinolines of the 70's" (*SJLMM Vol. III* 365); her comment implies the importance of being "in" fashion because of the ridicule associated with being "out" of fashion. Montgomery's characters, though not bound by the dictates of fashion when dressing, are often equally fashion-conscious. This fashion-consciousness and the time-sensitive nature of fashion links Montgomery's female characters with the "conductorettes" discussed above, women who used clothing in order to adapt to changing times.

As character mature and develop, this evolution often occurs in conjunction with the acquisition of fashionable or modern clothing. These characters are also presented in conflict with others who represent an older, stubbornly-outdated way of thinking, as well as dressing, representing a problematic inability to adapt to changed circumstances. Montgomery's short story, "The Revolt of Mary Isabel" (1908), depicts a battle for independence that is played out primarily through the purchase and wearing of fashionable dress. Mary Isabel, "a woman of forty" ("Revolt" 239), objects to her older sister's dictum that she must wear a bonnet: "I can't wear a bonnet yet, Louisa," she protested. 'Bonnets have gone out for everybody except really old ladies. I want a hat: one of those pretty, floppy ones with pale blue forget-me-nots.'" (239-240). Louisa not only dictates Mary Isabel's dress, but also her life. Mary Isabel's situation changes when a much-delayed letter from their dead brother arrives (ten years after his death) that is addressed to Mary Isabel. Tom writes that she ought not to let Louisa control her or "boss" her: "Don't let Louisa live your life for you; just you live it yourself" (245). Mary Isabel decides that she will "rebel at last and — how had Tom phrased it — oh, yes, assert her independence" (246). Mary Isabel's rebellion and her "assertion of independence" begins with her purchase of the much-desired hat and silver-grey silk. The "revolt" continues when Mary Isabel decides to attend

the induction of a new minister, to whom Louisa objects because she holds a grudge against his family for their part in a church feud. Dressed in her new finery, Mary Isabel attends and is consequently locked out of the women's shared home upon her return; the oncoming rain, which would ruin her new dress and hat, spurs her to "seek refuge over at Dr. Hamilton's" (250), their neighbour who also happens to be a member of the objectionable family and whom Mary Isabel has also been secretly meeting for weeks. This episode results in the marriage of Mary Isabel and Dr. Hamilton, but also reconciles Mary Isabel and Louisa, who puts an end to her control over her sister's life and accepts Mary Isabel's change in personality.

Louisa's treatment of Mary Isabel simultaneously ages her, making her look like an old woman in a bonnet, while infantilizing her by controlling her actions and dress. The old-fashioned clothing that Louisa insists that Mary Isabel wears, including a sunbonnet and black silk dresses, are associated with past times and age. Catherine Golden states, "Queen Victoria's forty-year widowhood and wearing of mourning weeds made mourning rituals popular among all social classes;" the black silk dresses of Mary Isabel, like the bonnets, gesture back to the Victorian era and the popularity of wearing black. The black dresses, with their connotations with death and dying, might also imply that Mary Isabel's life under the tyranny of Louisa is a slow death in its stagnation and oppression. Mary Isabel's desire for her hat and silver-grey silk dress represent a desire for life in the present, one in which Mary Isabel is no longer looked at and treated as the child that she was, but as the mature woman that she is. To Dr. Hamilton, Mary Isabel in her sunbonnet is "delicately virginal" and he is one of those who treats her like "a very young, pure girl" (242). But when Mary Isabel appears at church in her new clothes, items which she has picked out on her own while alone in town for the first time, Dr. Hamilton thinks, "What a pretty *woman* she was!" (249, emphasis added) and he is spurred on to propose marriage

soon after she appears on his doorstep. Mary Isabel's fashionable dress helps her to act the correct age and to be treated as such by others.

While Mary Isabel learns to live in the present, Louisa's refusal to keep up with the changing times almost leads to her complete social isolation. Already cut off from the society of the local church and her nearest neighbour, Louisa's outdated and unfashionable ideas about dress almost cause her the loss of her sister. Mary Isabel resents Louisa's behaviour toward her: "She had never had anything other girls had: friends, dresses, beaux; and it was all Louisa's fault — Louisa who was going to make her wear a bonnet for the rest of her life" (244). The lack of dresses and the unfashionable bonnet are linked to the lack of social connections with friends and beaux. Louisa's refusal to "allow neighbourliness" (244) distances both Louisa and Mary Isabel from their society. Her insistence on adherence to her dictums, initially only seeming to be inconvenient and unreasonable, are later shown to be intensely problematic. Louisa asserts, "I wore a bonnet before I was forty [...] and so should every decent woman. It is absurd to be thinking so much of dress at your age, Mary Isabel" (240). Louisa's statement reveals her to be in the wrong on her views, not only because of the peremptory way they are expressed, sometimes even hurting Mary Isabel "bitterly" (239), but also because she advocates a lack of care for dress which, in Montgomery's terms, is a sure sign of unjustified narrow-mindedness and potentially harmful rigidity. Louisa's main social connection is to Mary Isabel and her stubbornness toward Mary Isabel's dress nearly severs this relationship. Upon Mary Isabel's return from her solitary shopping expedition, Louisa "neither looked at [her purchases] nor spoke to Mary Isabel" (247); her silence displays a breaking off of communication between the sisters. Although Louisa "unbent sufficiently to remark that [the finished dress] fitted very well" (247), this temporary flexibility is quickly reversed by Mary Isabel's decision to attend the induction ceremony. When

Mary Isabel is about to leave dressed in her new finery, Louisa "shot one angry glance at Mary Isabel, then gave a short contemptuous laugh" (249); her wordless ridicule of Mary Isabel again shows the sisters' distancing from each other and their lack of verbal communication. It is Louisa's decision to lock Mary Isabel out in the rain that will ruin her new clothing that creates the climax of their separation: "Louisa had no intention of letting her in; she meant to keep her out until the dress and hat of her rebellion were spoiled. This was Louisa's revenge" (250). Louisa's action drives Mary Isabel away to Dr. Hamilton's where she declares that she "shall not go back to Louisa" (251). Mary Isabel makes good on her declaration. Even though the two sisters are reconciled at the end of the story when Mary Isabel is married from the sisters' shared home, the separation of the two becomes permanent. Mary Isabel becomes a resident of her new husband's home while Louisa is left in the old house alone, a consequence of Louisa's stubborn attitude toward Mary Isabel's dress.

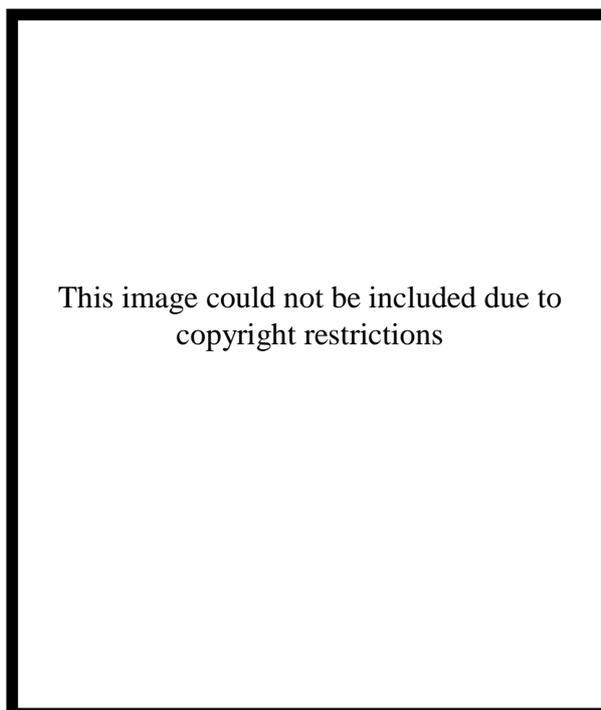
In *Jane of Lantern Hill*, grandmother's persistence in keeping things stagnant also leads to her social isolation and loss of a beloved family member, Robin. Elizabeth Epperly states, "Victoria Jane Stuart is afraid not of change but of sameness. She is stifled by a routine she is not allowed to question or bend" (220); the routine is controlled by grandmother, who is invested in sameness and, thus, represents the primary opposition to Jane's desire for change. Epperly also recognizes that "the quality of house" reflects "the quality of spirit" of the person who owns the house (224). Grandmother's rigidity and adherence to old-fashioned aesthetics are shown by her choice of home:

Mrs. Kennedy [grandmother] was perfectly satisfied with 60 Gay. She had come there as the bride of Robert Kennedy when Gay Street was the last word in streets and 60 Gay, built by Robert's father, one of the finest 'mansions' in Toronto. It had never ceased to be

so in her eyes. She had lived there for forty-five years and she would live there the rest of her life. Those who did not like it need not stay there. (2)

Grandmother's refusal to move out of the Victorian mansion of her youth, in spite of the fact that it is "hopelessly out of date" (2) and Gay Street has become no more than "shabby genteel" (3), displays a desire to hold on to a happy past as well as an inability to adapt to a changed present; grandmother is unable to see things other than how they were in the past. Grandmother's appearance is also old-fashioned; she is described by one lady as looking "just like a Whistler mother" (26), a reference to the 1871 painting by James McNeill Whistler (Weinberg n.p.). While Grandmother's appearance is thought of in terms of the medium of paint, an old and traditional art form, Jane and Robin are portrayed in more modern media: newspapers and photographs. Jane is on the front page of the "Charlottetown papers [...] for two days, and even the Toronto dailies gave her a column, with a picture" (182-183) when she catches the escaped circus lion, while Robin "goes to everything you see reported in *Saturday Evening*" (3). Grandmother attempts to fight against such modernizing influences, in part through the way in which she dresses Jane and, more particularly, Robin.

The wearing of modern clothing occurs in conjunction with a movement into new circumstances, while older styles of clothing are associated with being trapped in grandmother's unchanging regime. Although Robin's clothes are always beautiful and frequently new, they are not described as being fashionable. Indeed, the amount of clothing she wears, the layers of velvets and taffetas, seems to reflect a Victorian aesthetic (see Figure 2.2), particularly because when new clothing trends are mentioned it is in reference to masculine-influenced styles such as the wearing of pants (193), overalls (181), and pajamas (193), clothing that increases mobility and freedom of movement.

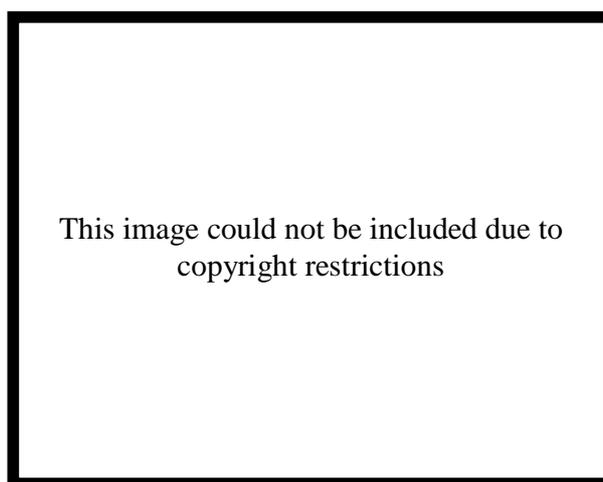


**Figure 2.2: "1937 Evening Dress." Robin may have worn a dress like this one. The design is from 1937, but its puffed sleeves and train are reminiscent of late-Victorian styles. (*Vintage Patterns Wikia*)**

Robin, like Mary Isabel, is not allowed to grow up or change; she is kept by the restraint of clothing in the role of daughter. Storm discusses the impact of "tensors," aspects of dress that "reduce the freedom of movement of the body or a body part either through the material used or the style of dress" (309), on behaviour: "Heavy fabrics or multiple layers of fabrics [...] can cause muscle fatigue, which results in feelings of depression and apathy. They also give a sense of physical impediment or interference" (310). The texture and materials of Robin's clothes, the stiff taffetas and heavy velvets and furs, impede Robin's maturation and evolution. Even her orchid chiffon dress, a gown of light material, has "trailing lace sleeves" (*JLH* 26), as though grandmother thinks Robin needs to be held back or weighted down from changing or moving away by excess material.

It is Jane who most easily adapts to new situations, like her new life on P.E.I. and wears the modern and mobile overalls. Storm links confidence with "dress that increases our

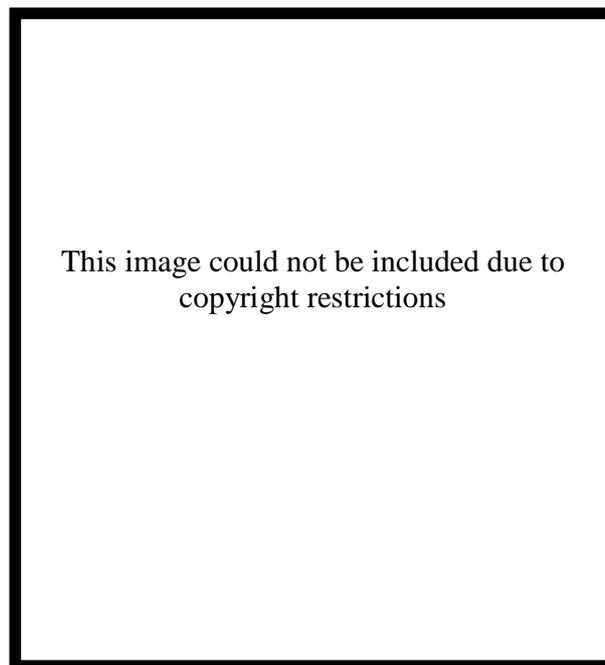
competency" (311) and states that "confidence is positively related to competence. Both are related to comfort" (312). When Jane wears overalls to drive in hay (*JLH* 175), her dress allows her to more competently execute this task and, thus, increase her confidence. Such positive influences on her self-image, which she has no access to at 60 Gay Street, help her to be more comfortable in new situations. In P.E.I., Jane is somewhere "where you could show how capable you were" (85) and it is this opportunity for capability and flexibility that situate the Island and Lantern Hill as modern, in spite of its pastoral trappings. When shopping for her second trip to the Island, Jane also gets "the niftiest little green bathing suit" (166) (see Figure 2.3), an item of clothing that Montgomery associates with modernity in her earlier novel, *The Blue Castle*, and which I will discuss below.



**Figure 2.3: "Nifty Bathing Suits." A 1938 advertisement for bathing suits of a style that promotes mobility. Jane would be able to swim with more ease in a bathing suit like this than in most other garments. (*Wearing History Blog*)**

While Jane's grandmother is left at the end of the novel unchanged, in *Anne of Green Gables*, Marilla's story is one of learning to be more flexible and to understand the value of modern fashions. As Mrs. Lynde points out, Marilla believes that there is a "hard and fast method" of bringing up children that works "as plain and easy as Rule of Three," but that Marilla is mistaken because "flesh and blood don't come under the head of arithmetic" (270). The stability and rigidity of rules that Marilla believes in are carried over into her thoughts on dress.

Marilla has Louisa-like tastes in dress and considers the fashionable puffed sleeves of the 1890s to be "ridiculous-looking things" (128); she prefers "the plain sensible ones" (128) of an earlier decade, presumably the 1880s when sleeves are plain and fitted (see Figure 2.4). Such tight sleeves are an example of tensors that "cause the wearer to limit his arm movements" (Storm 309-310) and Storm connects these types of tensors with the "rigid, tight conduct of the Victorian era" (310).



**Figure 2.4: "Sensible Sleeves." The plain, tight sleeves of the 1880s. (*Christine's Costume Page*)**

Marilla's rigidity and tightness govern her conduct with respect to emotional expression: "The lesson of a love that should display itself easily in spoken word and open look was one Marilla could never learn" (AGG 313-315). However, Marilla's voluntary participation in the purchase of a fashionable dress for Anne coincides with a rare display of emotion. When Marilla goes beyond simply not objecting to Matthew's gifts and suggestions for Anne's Queen's wardrobe and obtains the light "delicate pale green material" for an evening dress for Anne of her own volition, so that Anne will not "be behind" the other girls, she shows an understanding of the

importance of fashionable clothing in new situations (357). Marilla displays empathy for Anne, who may feel less confident among her peers while away from home, if she is clothed in unfashionable dress, as seems indicated by Marilla's remembrance of Anne first arriving at Green Gables "in her preposterous yellowish-brown wincey dress" with "heartbreak looking out of her tearful eyes" (358). The tears that come to Marilla's eyes over the memory and the possibility of future loneliness should Anne move away show a softening of Marilla. While earlier her emotions made her "stricter and more critical" (315), this burst of emotion results in her "[putting] her arms close about her girl and [holding] her tenderly to her heart" (360). By the end of the novel Marilla is finally able to verbally express her emotions: "Oh, Anne, I know I've been kind of strict and harsh with you maybe — but you mustn't think I didn't love you as well as Matthew did, for all that. I want to tell you now when I can" (382). Marilla learns to change and bend in a way that characters like Louisa and grandmother never do and is the better for it because it strengthens her social bonds.

Anne must also be flexible and able to adapt to new situations in order to belong in her new home of Avonlea. As Anne grows up and becomes more integrated into the community, her wardrobe becomes more fashionable. David and Wahl state that for female contemporaneous readers of *Anne of Green Gables* "details of cut and fabric illuminated the more personal transformative narrative of Anne's coming of age as a stylish young aesthete" (42). Anne's dresses are linked to Anne's maturation. She tells Marilla, "Mrs. Lynde says that if I keep stretching out next year as I've done this I'll have to put on longer skirts. [...] And when I put on longer skirts I shall feel that I have to live up to them and be very dignified" (AGG 324). While the clothing can affect behaviour, Anne's growth also influences her clothing. Marilla remarks to Mrs. Lynde one day in the summer that Anne has become "real steady and reliable" (325); that

fall, the dresses she makes for Anne are "longer" with a "stylish" flounce (329). Although Anne's clothing does not help her to be more capable in the way that Jane's does, Anne's capability does seem to promote the acquisition of more modern clothing.

It is interesting to note that Anne's desire for fashionable clothing, in the form of puffed sleeves, functions on two different chronological levels: one within the novel and one within the world of the reader. Although the novel was published in 1908, the fashions, particularly the puffed sleeves, date the world within the novel to the 1890s. However, large puffed sleeves became fashionable again in 1905, as noted by Montgomery in her journal (*CJLMM 1901-1911* 134). David and Wahl claim, "Anne's quest for puffed sleeves appealed to different age groups: for teenagers they were a symbol of current trends and modes, but for older readers who came of age in the 1890s, including Montgomery, they revived nostalgic memories" (45). If it is important in Montgomery's fictional worlds to be modern and fashionable, Anne is doubly modern in her fashionable puffed sleeves that reflect current trends in the setting of the novel and among contemporaneous readers (see Figures 2.5 and 2.6). However, Anne is also simultaneously caught in the past in relation to her readers, the ones for whom she evokes "nostalgic memories". Foster and Simons observe, "Retreating from the psychological and social conflicts which full maturity brings, the novel keeps Anne in a prepubescent state, safely within the stasis of childhood" (165). Although she grows and changes, Anne never fully matures into adulthood or the complete freedom and capability that modern fashions represent. While Jane revels in her freedom and independence, at the end of the novel Anne adapts herself to the needs of others and chooses to remain at old-fashioned Green Gables instead of going off to college to pursue her individual desires.

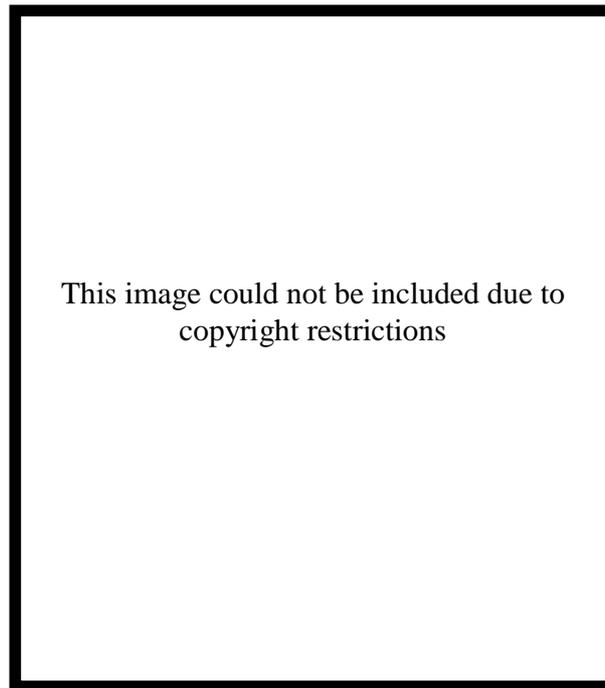


**Figure 2.5 and Figure 2.6: (left) "Puffed Sleeves of the 1890s." Puffed sleeves of the sort desired and worn by Anne. (*Christine's Costume Page*) and (right) "Puffed Sleeves of the 1900s." Puffed sleeves of the sort worn by readers of *Anne of Green Gables*. (*Christine's Costume Page*)**

In *The Blue Castle*, Valancy is portrayed within a double chronology similar to Anne's. It shows her, however, not in the current fashions of her novel's setting like Anne, but ahead of the novel's time and current with the contemporaneous 1920s reader. Valancy's empowerment and maturation are represented by her decidedly modern clothing and appearance, particularly in contrast with her stuffy, hypocritical family and their association with old-fashioned styles. The Stirling family, including Valancy at the beginning of the novel, dress in accordance with the fashions of the first decade of the twentieth century, the setting of the novel, as determined above. Olive, "the wonder girl of the whole Stirling clan" (7), wears light ruffled and flounced petticoats (20) that evoke the frilly lingerie of the Edwardian era. Valancy's dress is also old-fashioned with its "high neck and long, tight sleeves" (12), topped off by her "pompadour" hairstyle (13). Valancy laments her inability to have fashionable clothing: "She had never had a dress with low neck and elbow sleeves, although they had been worn, even in Deerwood, for over a year" (48).

At this point in the novel, Valancy's dress is not only old-fashioned to the reader, but also within the setting of the novel. Her out-of-date clothing, like that of Mary Isabel, reflects her infantilization by her family, who insist on calling her by the childish nickname of "Doss," while they simultaneously harp on her increasing age (16). Neither Valancy's clothing, nor her treatment by her family, reflects Valancy's true age and maturity.

When Valancy leaves her mother's home and forges a life for herself, her new clothing reflects her newfound empowerment. She finally obtains her desired low-necked and short-sleeved dress. While this garment might align Valancy with Deerwood society's current fashion trends, the "low, crimson girdle around the hips" (102) has a very modern, 1920s aesthetic; earlier dress positioned the waist either at the natural waist or above (see Figure 2.7). Similarly, Valancy's "flat figure" (103) evokes the slim, boyish figure of 1920s flappers, which was quite different from the voluptuous figure of the Edwardian Gibson girl that Olive possesses (139). As she further distances herself from her old-fashioned family, her appearance becomes increasingly modern. After marrying Barney, Valancy "shingles" her hair: "This was before the day of bobs and was regarded as a wild, unheard-of proceeding — unless you had typhoid. When Mrs. Frederick heard of it she almost decided to erase Valancy's name from the family Bible" (149). Valancy positions herself as far more modern than her family can conceive of with her 1920s bob. She adapts, and thrives, in her changed situation with Barney. The modernization of Valancy's appearance is presented in positive terms: "It [the bob] gave a meaning and a purpose to her little, three-cornered face that it never had possessed before" (149); Valancy's appearance gains meaning at the same time that her life does.



**Figure 2.7: "1920s Look."** The woman on this sewing pattern has the bobbed hair and flat figure of Valancy. Also note the dress' dropped waist like that of Valancy's green dress. (*Vintage Patterns Wikia*)

Valancy also gains freedom and mobility. Where once she "got a buggy drive only when some uncle or cousin remembered to fling her 'a chance'" (21), with Barney she "clatter[s] through Deerwood" in his "unspeakable car" (146), she learns "to paddle a canoe as well as Barney himself" (154-155), and she swims, "running down to the water for a plunge whenever she felt like it" (157). In her new life, Valancy is not hampered by "tight sleeves" (12) or "the swathings of rose silk and lace" that Olive wears (139), beautiful though Olive's dress might be. Instead, Valancy has "a pale green bathing-suit" (157), a garment that defies the clothing standards of her Edwardian family. By the 1920s, bathing suits had become quite streamlined compared to their earlier, voluminous counterparts (see Figures 2.8 and 2.9). Valancy's freedom of movement in her bathing suit and her enjoyment in swimming reflects Storm's statement, "[C]onfidence can be achieved [...] from dress that increases our competency. Most sports have some dress associated with them that allows the wearer to perform more competently" (311). In

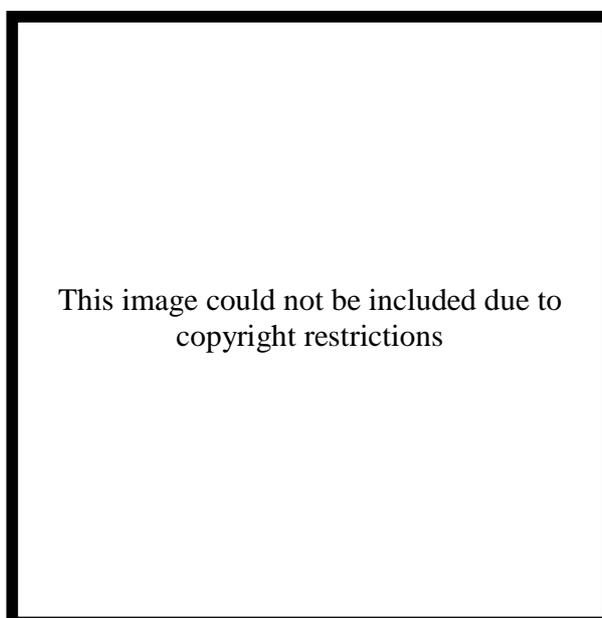
her modern dress, Valancy learns the sort of confidence and capability in her new life that Jane is able to on P.E.I.



**Figure 2.8 and Figure 2.9: (left) "1926 Bathing Suits." The women in these photographs wear the new style, streamlined swimsuits of the 1920s. (Compare with Figure 2.9) They also have bobbed hair. (*Wearing History Blog*) and (right) "1900s Bathing Suit." Earlier bathing suit with bloomers and skirt. All of the material would be cumbersome when wet. (*The Metropolitan Museum of Art*)**

While fashionable clothing is often portrayed positively by Montgomery, modern ideologies were not without their problems. Montgomery struggled with changing mores with regard to morality, aesthetics, and Modernism. Later in her writing career, Montgomery was viewed as a "sentimentalist" (*SJLMM Vol. III* 387) for her rejection of Modernist ideals of realism which, to Montgomery, insisted on portraying metaphorical "latrines and pigstyes" (387) instead of the beauty to be found in life and nature. Montgomery was also well-aware of the increasing prominence of sexuality in contemporary life. Commenting on modern novels, she notes, "Some 'sex' novels are interesting and stimulating, whatever may be thought of their wisdom or unwisdom" (387). Years later, on looking over some other modern books,

Montgomery states, "They were *hideous*. I am not a prude but I draw the line at *filth*" (*SJLMM Vol. V* 278). Montgomery was clearly interested in representations of sexuality in literature, but had no desire to cross the line into immorality or ugliness. Many of her characters are invested in appearing attractive to potential mates, without any stigma of immorality attached, so long as they do not commit the vulgar offence of displaying too much sexuality, too openly as Valancy's cousin Olive does. Olive, as Barney says, "keeps all her goods in the shop-window" (172) and descriptions of Olive frequently make mention of the exposure of her body: "she might show her fine, white, regular teeth rather too lavishly when she smiled" (54) and her arms "[gleam] through green chiffon" (55) (see Figure 2.10). Valancy never makes such a mistake; in her green dress, she covers her exposed neck with a makeshift necklace of clovers that "gave her the comfortable sensation of a collar and were oddly becoming" (104). Valancy associates herself with the beauty of nature and creates beauty through the judicious mixing of display and concealment.



**Figure 1.10: "Miss Camille Clifford." This picture shows Camille Clifford, one of the women who modelled for Charles Dana Gibson. Like Olive, she has a voluptuous figure and wears chiffon and lace. Note how her arms, shoulders, and neck are all bared. (NYPL Digital Gallery)**

Once again, Montgomery re-writes traditional moral ideologies about vanity, adornment, and sexuality. Maura Spiegel notes,

The conventional opposition between the fashionable or 'ornate' woman and the 'anti-fashionable' woman is often configured, especially in [the Victorian] period, as one between ornateness and plainness [...]. In novels of the period we repeatedly encounter this opposition as a contest between the 'ornate woman' and the 'plain woman,' and it almost always resolves in the triumph of the plain woman — who gets her man. (182)

Spiegel also remarks on the virtues associated with plainness: "earnestness, modesty, integrity, autonomy, and character; and, in some instances [...] wit" (182), as well as the faults linked to ornament: "vanity, silliness, falseness, sentimentality" and "sophistication (or too much worldliness)" (182). The Victorian novel posits the fashionably dressed woman as a poor sexual choice in contrast with the virtuous plain woman. This dichotomy is particularly prevalent in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, as Spiegel observes (182). Montgomery was very familiar with the novel; interestingly she comments on "the difference — the unfathomable gulf — between heroines of the Victorian age and the 'heroines' of today" in conjunction with *Jane Eyre* (*SJLMM Vol. III 2*). Jane Eyre, the heroine, rejects adornment and dressing up, which Rochester, her lover, offers her and these rejections of her lover's gifts denote her virtue, as do her plain and simple tastes.

Montgomery's female characters behave very differently toward beautiful clothing. Anne, in her plain wincey dress, dreams of the pretty gowns she may one day possess; with "a white dress" her "highest ideal of earthly bliss" (*AGG 54*). And while Anne may consider herself to be a poor choice of mate, it is because she is "so homely" (54), not because she is vain or cares too much about clothing. In Montgomery's fictional worlds, it is the beautiful, well-dressed women

who are the best wifely prospects, such as Aunt Beatrice ("The Romance of Aunt Beatrice") and Miss Ponsonby ("The Dissipation of Miss Ponsonby"). These kind women first obtain beautiful, visually-arresting clothing then marriage proposals follow. In her short story "What Aunt Marcella Would Have Called It" (1935), the heroine, Glen, puts on beautiful, fashionable clothing in order to alert the man she loves to her sexual maturity and availability. Living in the shadow of her older, smarter, and more beautiful sister, Isabel, Glen seems "rather dumb" ("Aunt Marcella" 190) to her neighbour, Dudley. Under the care of her Aunt Marcella, Glen is not allowed to bob her hair and "her lovely golden-brown braid hanging down her back" makes her look "like a twelve-year-old schoolgirl of the century's teens" (189) instead of the seventeen-year-old of the 1930s that she is. Isabel is poised to return from a five year absence and Glen fears that Dudley will fall in love with Isabel. When Isabel delays her return for a few days, but sends ahead her trunk of clothing, Glen sees this as an opportunity to finally "wake Dudley up" (193), a view that sets her apart from heroines like Jane Eyre:

Glen ran up to her room with the intention of having a good cry. But when she got there she changed her mind.

"Crying won't do any good. The girls of Aunt Marcella's generation cried. I've got to do better than that. [...]" (193)

Her solution is to dress up in Isabel's beautiful clothes and impersonate Isabel. In Isabel's dress of "orchid chiffon" (193) and "sophisticated earrings" (194) with her hair up in a knot, "nobody would ever dream of taking her for a child" (194). Glen is able to be "gay, daring, brilliant" (194) when Dudley comes over to visit Isabel. Glen gives herself the appearance of a sophisticated and ornamented woman of the world. Although momentarily tricked by the disguise, Dudley quickly realizes that it is Glen and tells her she is "[the] loveliest, sweetest woman [he's] ever seen ... the

woman [he's] been waiting for all [his] life" (195); he recognizes both her identity and her character. The marriage proposal, in this case Dudley's declaration that he will marry Glen, immediately follows. Montgomery attaches no stigma to Glen's deception, perhaps because it is not a deception so much as a revelation. In these stories, where dressing up leads quickly to marriage, beautiful clothing functions as a way to show the potential lover the beauty and, thus, sexual viability, of the wearer.

Glen also differs from her earlier counterparts, like Anne, in her interest in exploring the possibilities of romantic love and sexual potential from a young age. Glen fell in love with Dudley at the age of twelve, evidenced by the fact that "her legs trembled the first time she saw him" ("Aunt Marcella" 189), and while this may be considered no more than a girlhood "crush," at the time the story takes place she is still only seventeen and Dudley acknowledges that old-fashioned Aunt Marcella will think Glen "too young to be married" (196). In spite of her years, Glen takes the initiative to make herself sexually attractive to Dudley by dressing up. Jane may be considered Glen's contemporary in terms of date (1930s), but is rather young to be considering romance, even for a precocious modern girl. However, in the earlier 1920s novel, *The Blue Castle*, Olive displays a history of romance and sexuality that can be considered very modern; the reader is told "Olive had been surrounded by a crowd of eager beaux since her early teens" (55) and "little boys in school used to 'persecute' her with love letters" (56). In contrast, the "almost fourteen" (AGG 316) Anne of the beginning of the twentieth century has no interest in romantic love, stating, "Young men are all very well in their place, but it doesn't do to drag them into everything" (315), an indirect criticism of her friend Ruby Gillis who "thinks of nothing but young men" (315). Even at the end of the novel, when Anne is older, she only expects to experience "congenial friendship" (396) with Gilbert Blythe after they have made up

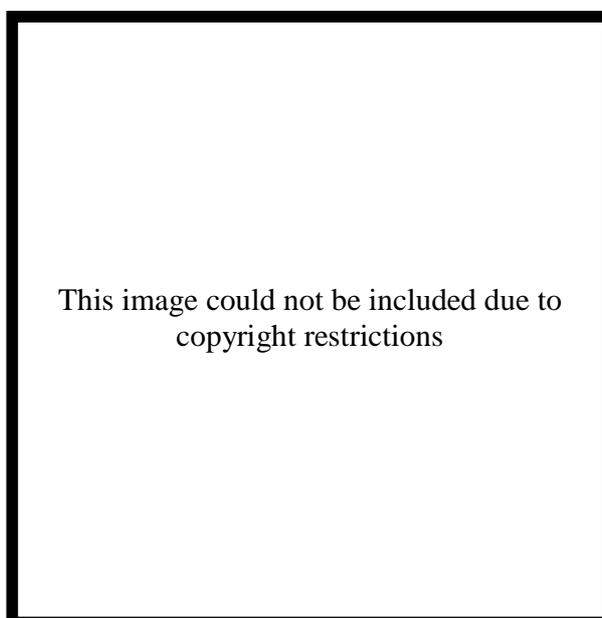
their quarrel. While Montgomery is critical of sexuality in girls in her earlier work, the tone of her later fiction with regard to girlhood sexuality, which is slightly humorous, indicates a more indulgent attitude. This change in tone likely reflects changes in societal attitudes, rather than Montgomery's own personal beliefs. Although she complains in her journal of her publisher not allowing her to portray "a young girl as she really is" (*SJLMM Vol. III* 157), by which she means as having "some very vivid love affairs" (157), in her previous entry, she writes, "The present generation has saner views of sex and its presentation to the young" (157) compared to her own childhood experiences. The reality of sexuality was thus becoming more open and more openly connected to the young.

As the century progressed, sexual attractiveness became increasingly associated with youth. Strong-Boag writes, "In the 1920s and 1930s, youthfulness was celebrated to an unprecedented degree in print, on film, and on radio" (179). The result of this focus on youthfulness and its connection to sexual attractiveness was the mindset that this attractiveness would be lost with age. Strong-Boag states, "Women's most obvious resources in an unequal marriage market were their looks and sexuality. [...] According to the youth-conscious culture of these decades, beauty and erotic appeal deteriorated with age and require constant attention from childhood on. Older women were believed to be at a substantial disadvantage" (85). Montgomery portrays this societal attitude in *The Blue Castle* in the form of "the beastly advertisement," likely for some sort of beauty product, on the side of "the tumble-down old carriage shop in the next lot" that says, "Keep that schoolgirl complexion" (14). While young Glen only needs a beautiful dress to show her as she is in order to make her a viable romantic mate, Montgomery's older unmarried women need more transformative clothing: dresses that make them younger.

Montgomery's spinster character Miss Ponsonby appears to be an unlikely candidate for romance. She is described through the eyes of the young narrator, Elizabeth, in terms that seem to characterize her as a typical old maid: "We guessed her age to be forty-five at least, but we found out afterward that we were mistaken. She was only thirty-five. She was tall and thin and pale, one of those drab-tinted persons who look as if they had never felt a rosy emotion in their lives" ("Dissipation" 139). Age is connected by Elizabeth with a lack of passion and an unattractive appearance. Later, seeing her in a different light, Elizabeth realizes that Miss Ponsonby must have been attractive earlier in life: "It seemed odd, somehow, to think of Miss Ponsonby as young and pretty. She seemed so essentially middle-aged and faded" (142). As a middle-aged, unmarried woman, in nineteenth-century terms, Miss Ponsonby's faded appearance could be attributed to a thwarted sexuality. Gabriella Åhmansson discusses nineteenth-century theories on sexuality using a pamphlet written by a Dr. Drysdale as her source: "Chastity was, according to Drysdale, a great health hazard" (150). A loss of "gaiety" and "bloom" (150), symptoms exhibited by Miss Ponsonby, are the results of such chastity, while sexual fulfillment may be considered the "cure." In this story, however, Miss Ponsonby's cure comes in the form of dress, clothing which reveals her still-present, if hidden, sexual attractiveness. The dress lent to Miss Ponsonby "clung around her in lovely, filmy curves that made her look willowy and girlish," while the excitement of getting dressed up "flushed her cheeks into positive pinkness" (146). As Miss Ponsonby's "bloom" returns to her cheeks, she looks younger, "fifteen apparent birthdays the less" (146), and her curvy body becomes a visual focal point. With her youthfulness returns her sexual attractiveness. Miss Ponsonby calls it "a dream of lost youth" (146) not only because the dress makes her look young and pretty again, but also because the dress will enable her to renew her chances of marriage and sexual fulfillment, which were

presumably lost with age. At the party "all the middle-aged men, widowers, wedded, and bachelors, who had known her in her girlhood [crowd] around her" (147), a testament to her renewed sexual vitality. In keeping with the theme of lost youth regained, it comes as no surprise that Miss Ponsonby and her former lover, Stephen Shaw, once again become engaged.

In *The Blue Castle*, youth, sexuality, and dress are also linked, but in a slightly different way: dress creates a sexual attractiveness that, in turn, creates youthfulness. Valancy's despondency at the opening of the novel is because she comes to the realization that she is "twenty-nine and unsought by any man" (*BC* 1). The number twenty-nine seems to sound a death knell on Valancy's ability to be attract a husband and the sexual fulfillment marriage brings. However, clothing helps Valancy become more sexually attractive. Although, when trying on her new green dress, to Valancy the "girdle around the hips seemed positively indecent," she acknowledges that it "had given her flat figure an entirely different appearance" (102-103) (see Figure 2.11).



**Figure 2.11: "Dress and Beaded Girdle." The figure on the left wears a dress made of crepe with a beaded girdle that emphasized the hips like that worn by Valancy. (*Christine's Costume Page*)**

The green dress emphasizes Valancy's body in a sexually alluring way and, when she finally gains enough courage to wear it to the Chidley Corners dance, men take notice of her:

She overheard two of the 'up back' young men talking about her in the dark 'lean-to' behind her.

'Know who that girl in green is?'

'Nope. Guess she's from out front. [...] Got a stylish look to her.'

'No beaut but cute-looking, I'll say. 'Jever see such eyes?' (106)

Valancy is no longer "insignificant-looking" (12); flattering clothing has made her visually-arresting and attention-catching. It is the night of the dance that Valancy also realizes she is in love with Barney. As they sit in his car that evening, Valancy, who has had a colourless life that echoes the fadedness of Miss Ponsonby, feels she has "come to a little patch of violets, purple and fragrant" (112). Beautiful clothing brings out Valancy's sexual potential, and to such a degree that it is obvious to onlookers. Running into them in the woods, Olive looks at Valancy and cannot help but notice a change: "She looked — not pretty — Doss couldn't be pretty — but provocative, fascinating — yes, abominably so" (116-117). When Valancy marries Barney, her sexual fulfillment and new wardrobe make her not only attractive, but also youthful. Her new married life seems to her a world "which was young with immortal youth" (147) and Valancy becomes young again in it, instead of simply "still young," which, as Valancy notes, is a very different thing (113). Valancy's Uncle Benjamin sees Valancy and nearly does not recognize her: "[...] he did not realise until he had gone two blocks further on that the girl in the scarlet-collared blanket coat, with cheeks reddened [...] was Valancy. When he did realise it, Uncle Benjamin was indignant. What business had Valancy to look like — like — like a young girl?" (171).

Valancy, in her "scarlet-collared coat," has obtained the bloom and colour that she never had before in her old-maidish life.

In Montgomery's fiction, clothing holds power; it enables characters to adapt and navigate new situations with confidence. Beautiful dress also has transformative properties; it can make faded, middle-aged women young and blooming. Montgomery's female characters are smart enough to recognize this potential in clothing and to actively make use of it, in spite of earlier ideologies that associate interest in clothing and visual appearance with empty vanity and sinfulness. They are also able to avoid the pitfalls of modern ideologies that give sexual power and attractiveness only to the young by showing that with the right clothing older women can put on youth and sexual attractiveness, like a garment. They empower themselves using their appearance and beautiful clothing in order to obtain what they want, whether that is freedom or marriage or both.

### Chapter Three: Model Heroines and Maternal Feminism

"I want to have a child — something to link me with the future of my race," (*SJLMM Vol. II* 102) writes L.M. Montgomery in her journal after announcing her pregnancy. Montgomery combines the concepts of motherhood and humanity, noting the integral part that maternity plays in the formation of society. Dominant ideologies about the role of women in society placed emphasis on the importance of women in governing the home. Ramsay Cook and Wendy Mitchinson remark, "The proper sphere of women was not politics or economics, it was the home, the nurturing of family life and values" (224). Within the home, morals that would guide the behaviour of society's citizens were instilled by women, thus making women "the keepers of morality for society" (224), the basis of maternal feminism. Cecily Devereux describes the workings of maternal feminism: "[...] 'the mother of the race' [...] was [...] not to be limited to her own private, domestic sphere, but was to exercise her maternal skills upon the race at large" ("New Woman" 178). Writing about the maternal figures who dominate the world of *Anne of Green Gables*, Erika Rothwell claims, "In portraying this world of female guardians who nurture Anne and Avonlea, Montgomery identifies herself with maternal feminism, a powerful branch of the women's movement in turn-of-the-century Canada" (134). In her works, Montgomery explores this moral role of women in society, creating many models of both ideal and problematic womanhood. These female characters, while exercising their influences for good over other characters, could also be considered to embody moral lessons for the reader and, thus, be as influential in society as their real-life counterparts. The benefits, such as the acquisition of beautiful dress, that accrue to those characters who behave admirably would signal to the reader what constituted desirable female behaviour.

Montgomery's fiction posits an ideal model of femininity that is based on usefulness and practicality, as well as distinct class and race biases. Her white, Anglo, middle-class female characters who are portrayed within some sort of familial continuity, often in relation to female relatives, are rewarded by appropriate and beautiful dress when they exhibit the virtues of capability, resourcefulness, and usefulness. Often their utility is an emotional one that builds and strengthens familial or communal bonds through caring, or maternal, behaviour. Womanly virtue is significant in its implications with regard to nation-building and maternal feminism. The influence for good that female characters have within the domestic sphere, such as the creation of an emotionally supportive home, moves outward to a wider sphere that mimics the smaller, domestic one. The nation is an expanded version of the smaller home or family in which women enact the same moral influence. A lack of interest in the wider world denies this model in which the home and nation are inherently connected and, as a result, prohibits wider feminine influence.

Interest in fashion reflects this involvement with a larger community outside of the domestic sphere. Penny Storm states, "Fashion is always a collective behaviour since it means dress that has become aesthetically pleasing to most of the people in the society or culture" (287), thus fashion cannot exist in isolation away from the world. Storm also notes that fashion is promoted by "cross-cultural contact" and restricted by "strong values for tradition and custom" (288). One would therefore expect that women who adhere to traditional roles for women that isolate them within the narrow space of the domestic sphere would have little contact with fashion. Alison Matthews David and Kimberly Wahl discuss the way in which fashion was negatively associated with the figure of the New Woman and that publications attempted to counteract this influence by "reinforc[ing] traditional feminine roles and by extension acceptable modes of dressing" (46). Fashion connected women with a role outside of the home, sometimes

in a way that was threatening to society's traditional social mores. Interaction with this broader, more public sphere also brings with it the pressure to appear in conventional, or fashionable, clothing, as explored in Chapter Two, in order to be considered appropriately dressed.

Conformity, reflected by Montgomery's characters' adherence to fashion norms, promotes bonding among individuals and communities, creating a unified nation, mirrored by the unified appearance of Montgomery's fashion-conscious female characters. A disregard for fashion implies, on the part of Montgomery's female characters, a lack of interest and active involvement in nation-building.

Montgomery's depiction of active, capable young heroines was a departure from British portrayals of girls in the colonies at the time. Sharyn Pearce describes the image of "the adolescent girl in imperial literature" (235) who promoted dominant national values: "[...] she reveals only too clearly that to be born female is to be born into a world that demands submission, passivity, and dependency [...]. [...] Incarcerated within the family home, her future realm, she passively and vapidly awaits her destiny as wife and mother" (236). Although, as part of the Commonwealth, Canada shared a number of Britain's values and ideologies, Pearce notes that the girls, such as Anne, "created by a native-born Canadian [Montgomery], rather than British authors — are demonstrably more self-sufficient, active, and adventurous than their British cousins" (237). This difference in portrayal may be attributed to the greater realism with which a Canadian-born author could depict Canadian life. Beth Light and Joy Parr remark on the need for Canadian women to be active, resourceful, and capable in both urban and rural environments during Montgomery's lifetime. Light and Parr discuss the role of wives in urban environments where husbands often faced employment instability: "She planned and provisioned for the family's move to a new place, put her labour and acumen toward the founding of a new family

business, or found wage work to provide the cash to tide the household over the crisis" (152). Canada was filled with women who had had to make their way in a new country, a task that required vigorous activity and self-sufficiency in order to find success. Montgomery herself, in recounting her family history, remarks more than once on the hardiness of her female ancestors. She tells the story of an aunt who "had given birth to seventeen children, had brought them up and had done the work of a primitive P.E. Island farm. And yet, on the day she was seventy, she had her first experience of 'feeling tired'" (*SJLMM Vol. IV* 134). Such were the women whose example Montgomery had before her as she created her own fictional women, characters who exist in relation to other female relatives in the same way that Montgomery viewed herself as connected to her own female ancestors.

While Montgomery may portray Canadian life with greater realism than her British counterparts, she also promotes an unrealistic view of virtuous Canadian womanhood that marginalizes women of colour, Francophone women, and lower-class women. Devereux remarks on the way in which Montgomery constructs Canadian-ness as "an ethnic grouping that [...] is located within an Anglo-Celtic settler culture" (qtd. in Pearce 233) and Pearce observes that, in *Anne of Green Gables* (1908), "Montgomery's French-Canadians [...] are largely absent, and when they do appear, they are caricatured as incompetent, untrustworthy, and slatternly servants. Moreover, [...] indigenous characters are erased from this peculiarly monocultural view of the nation" (233). Characters that deviate from Montgomery's white, Anglo, middle-class norm are almost non-existent in her fiction and, thus, are not shown to be candidates for exhibitions of virtuous femininity. In fact, many of Montgomery's heroines rely on situations specific to this particular group in order to have the opportunity or ability to display the feminine virtues of capability and resourcefulness; class in particular has an important bearing on these opportunities.

Montgomery's virtuous female characters are often invited to parties or events that require formal clothing; their suitability as participants in such events, as evidenced by their invitations from other middle-class, or upper-middle-class, people, is a reflection of their middle-class status, which is portrayed as inherent, unchanged despite whatever financial circumstances they may be reduced to. The middle-class status of some of Montgomery's other heroines is marked by their possession of financial resources that allows them to purchase a wardrobe extensive enough to be constantly appropriately dressed, regardless of occasion. Middle-class virtue is thus linked to specialized dress, clothing that is only appropriate for particular occasions.

In "Aunt Caroline's Silk Dress" (1907), Carry and Patty Lea are rewarded for their creativity, hard work, and resourcefulness, as well as their selflessness, when they each figure out a way for the other to attend their events; Carry gives up her silk to make Patty a dress and Patty has the idea to make over Aunt Caroline's old silk dress for Carry. It is the girls' middle-class status that precipitates the need for formal clothing that allows them to exhibit their virtues. Carry and Patty are middle-class sisters with modest social aspirations. Carry's need for a new dress is prompted by the fact that the wedding she has been invited to in the large town of Enfield will have "lots of grandees" ("Aunt Caroline" 54) as guests. Similarly, Patty has been invited to a party given by "the Forbes girls" who are of a set that is "not the Lea set" and whose invitations are much sought-after (56); Carry remarks, "Clare Forbes isn't a girl whose friendship is to be lightly thrown away when it is offered" (56). However, Patty has nothing to wear but her "last winter's plaid dress, which is a good two inches too short and skimpy in proportion" which would "be an insult to Clare" to wear (56). Although currently in financial distress, the girls are used to a higher income life; the recent "hard five years of pinching and economizing" (55) implies an earlier time of greater ease and prosperity. Their familial connections also indicate

middle-class financial comfort: Aunt Kathleen can afford to send them the silk organdie and Edward Curry possesses Aunt Caroline's profitable farm. Their invitations to formal events are reaffirmations of this middle-class status because they mark the Lea girls' suitability as guests at these events, events which require more formal dress. Making connections with privileged people, either at the wedding or at the Forbes' party, could represent for the girls a return to an earlier, happier time, such as when Carry was twelve and "before her father had died" (53). Coincidentally, this earlier time was also when she had "her last pretty dress" (53), a linking between happiness and well-being, middle-class status, and the possession of a more extensive, prettier wardrobe.

The reduced circumstances in which the Lea girls live provides the opportunity for creativity and resourcefulness; hard work alone is not enough to gain a reward in this story. Carry's selflessness, which causes her to make up her silk organdie for Patty, leaves her without a dress for the wedding, but Patty's creative idea that Carry make up Aunt Caroline's old dress for herself solves the problem: "It just came to me at supper. Mrs. Forbes was sitting opposite to me, and her dress suggested it" (59). While it is Patty's mind that creates the idea of the dress, Carry's hands carry out the physical work that make the dress a reality. She has the materials, the "black lace of mother's [...] and the big black lace shawl of Grandmother Lea's" (59), that will cover the gaudy silk brocade as well as the black velvet that will trim it. Her economical habits are rewarded: the saving of these random items in addition to Aunt Caroline's old dress proves useful. It is interesting to note the female inheritance of the useful items, as though virtue is something that can be passed on, possibly genetically. It is through Carry's resourceful actions that the hundred dollars is revealed within the old dress' skirt lining. Aunt Caroline's note tells Carry that she is giving her the gift because "you've worked hard" (61), reinforcing

Montgomery's practical schema of virtue. The girls are rewarded by both the money that will pay off the mortgage as well as the possession of a pretty, formal dress for each of them, a distinctly middle- or upper-class wardrobe element.

While the Lea girls are rewarded for this singular exercise in practical virtue, Jane, nicknamed "Superior Jane" by the other characters in *Jane of Lantern Hill* (1937), is, in her extensive capability, the epitome of virtuous Canadian womanhood. The book begins with Jane being thwarted in her desire to be useful, "[...] the tragedy of her little existence was that nobody ever wanted her to help" (*JLH* 15), but this problem is soon remedied once Jane arrives on the Island. Elizabeth Epperly observes, "Jane is good at *everything* she puts her hand to, whether it is driving a tractor, shingling a roof, finding a home for her orphan friend. The only thing she cannot do, it seems, is make good doughnuts" (222-223). It is Jane's exceptional ability that marks her as "superior." Much of her virtue seems to be a genetic inheritance. Her notable cooking skill comes from her paternal side; Jane's father claims, "Any descendant of my mother's can cook" (*JLH* 64), and Irene and Jane prove this to be true. And her strength of will, which helps her through difficult times, appears to be an inheritance from grandmother. When Jane is determined to return to the Island in spite of the protestations of her mother and grandmother, her expression becomes that of grandmother: "Jane looked down at the carpet and her lips set in a line that had an odd resemblance to grandmother's" (161). Jane's virtues connect her with previous generations of a particular kind of Canadian womanhood, one that Devereaux calls "Anglo-Celtic" (qtd. in Pearce 233), as implied by the Scottish surnames Stuart and Kennedy. Margaret Anne Doody, in her discussion of names in *Anne of Green Gables*, remarks on the presence of aristocratic names in the novel and Montgomery's own satisfaction in having an aristocratic name (28). Such aristocratic ties were important to class-conscious Montgomery.

Jane's ancestry is distinctly middle- or upper-middle- class. While grandmother might accuse Jane of having "low tastes" (*JLH* 11) and her father might be considered "poor" (131), these terms can be considered relative. Jane wants for nothing when living with her well-educated father, in spite of his alleged poverty. They certainly live on an economic level far above some of the poverty-stricken neighbours, the Snowbeams, who never get any kind of pudding but rice pudding because "[it's] cheap" (104), and Min and her ma, who "does washing for all the summer boarders" (117) for a living. Jane appears to be thoroughly middle-class on her father's side, perhaps even upper-middle-class in rural P.E.I. terms. Her maternal family is undoubtedly upper-middle-class with their mansion and wealth and society connections, although Montgomery portrays most of these privileged people with little sympathy. Montgomery clearly celebrates a hard-working middle class, like Jane and her father, as opposed to an idle one, in keeping with her portrayal of resourceful and capable virtuous womanhood.

In addition to her varied skills, Jane also possesses a wardrobe that contains clothing appropriate for every task and event she might encounter. She has "gingham dresses and aprons" (79) for housekeeping at Lantern Hill, overalls for driving hay and shingling (175 & 181), silk dresses for school concerts (39), and a "little green bathing suit" for swimming (166). Even clothes that appear to be impractical or useless find a function with Jane. The beautiful "rose-pink organdy with delicious frills" (166) that her mother picks out and which Jane thinks she'll never have a chance to wear in rural P.E.I. comes in handy when Jane is made a bridesmaid for a Lantern Hill friend. And part of the myriad of expensive clothes purchased for her by grandmother for her trip are transformed by Jane into more humble, but useful, items: "Dad had bought a dishpan that day, but neither of them had thought about a dishcloth or dish towels. Jane got two new undervests out of her trunk and slit them open" (82). Grandmother's financial

resources, a result of her wealthy background and marriage, are what make possible Jane's diverse wardrobe. Without this monetary backing, Jane could be as poorly dressed and, linked to this, potentially helpless as her poor friend Jody.

Poverty-stricken, working-class Jody lives a life that is far removed from Jane's, even though she lives next door. In fact, Jody has far more in common with orphaned and friendless Anne than she does with Jane. Jody is an unwanted drudge in the boarding house at 58 Gay. All of her family is deceased, her parents and the cousin who brought her up, and none of them were "*people*" like Jane's upper-middle-class family, although they were "respectable" and "always paid their way while they were alive" (21). Although also orphaned, the middle-class Lea girls still have each other in addition to other relations. Anne's past is more similar to Jody's in that she also lacks relations and has worked as an unwanted drudge for other people. However, Marilla remarks on an important difference: "[...] there's nothing rude or slangy in what she does say. She's ladylike. It's likely her people were nice folks" (AGG 89). Anne's parents were both high school teachers and, although raised by "a poor woman who came in to scrub" (86), Anne's speech reflects this genetic origin. Her essential middle-class status is marked out by her speech, while Jody's lower-class origins are revealed by her frequent use of the ungrammatical "ain't" (JLH 18, 21, 51), a word that Anne would never dream of uttering. Jody's dearth of familial relations as well as her working-class background prevent Jody from exhibiting the sort of capable virtue that Montgomery's middle-class heroines display.

Instead of being a model of virtue, Jody acts as a foil to the more competent Jane, often receiving assistance from "superior" Jane. At their first meeting, the narrator describes Jody's helpless sadness in contrast with Jane's "strong, capable little hands" (16). In a symbolic gesture, Jane "put[s] her arm about the girl [Jody]" (16), a sheltering that continues throughout the novel.

Jody's existence is characterized by lack and inability; she is not allowed to have a garden (16), pick blossoms from the cherry tree in the yard (16), play the piano (17), or have a toy (20). Although a hard worker who engages in "peeling potatoes, washing dishes, sweeping, dusting, running errands, [and] scouring knives" (17), Jody is introduced with an emphasis on a moment of incompetence; she is in trouble with her employer because she "stumbled with a tray of tumblers [...] and broke three of them" (16). Jody's lack of virtuous capability is reflected in her wardrobe or, rather, lack thereof. Jody wears the cast-offs given to her by the boarders at 58 Gay; Jane tells her mother who looks doubtfully upon Jody because of her appearance, "She *can't help* her clothes. She just has to wear what's given her and she never has more than two dresses at a time ... one to wear every day and one to go to Sunday School in. Even the Sunday school one isn't very clean ... it was Mrs. Bellew's Ethel's old pink one and she spilled coffee on it" (19, emphasis added). The state of Jody's clothing is a result of both her poverty and her inability to do anything about it. While some of Montgomery's other characters take an active role in changing their existing clothing in spite of their poverty, like the Lea girls, Jody wears what is given to her as is. She lacks the resourcefulness to alter existing circumstances and relies on Jane to help her with her appearance. Jane determines to show Jody "how to wash her hair" and to give Jody her spare jar of cold cream to fix Jody's "red and chapped" hands (19). This need for Jane's help does not mean that Jody is somehow incurably incompetent or morally unworthy, but that the potential for usefulness which Jody possesses remains untapped until she is chosen for adoption by the eccentric Titus ladies, Violet and Justina, which occurs, once again, through the activity of Jane.

Jody's adoption by the Titus ladies of P.E.I. is intertwined with discussion about, and acquisition of, clothing. The two sisters are only able to agree on the sex of the child they are

willing to adopt because "neither of [them] knows anything about dressing a boy" and dressing a girl would be "more fun" (193). More pertinent to Jody, in their somewhat indirect inquiries as to her character, they ask whether or not Jody would "want to wear pants" or "pajamas," these questions following another about whether Jody "hasn't too much bounce" (193). A bouncing girl implies someone who is energetic, spirited, or has a forward personality; one may infer vulgarity or coarseness in a girl who has "too much bounce," an excess of personality or pushiness, just the sort of girl who might go around in pants and pajamas. Such questions about Jody's character seem to stem from Jane's comment that Jody "never has any nice clothes" (193), as though the Titus ladies associate a lack of "nice clothes" with low class, poverty, and dirt. In this light, their question about whether Jody might have any "unpleasant insects about her" (194) is more understandable and less shocking to the reader than it is to Jane. While this consideration seems to put an end to their deliberations about adoption, the next day they change their minds and inform Jane that they will adopt Jody and their plans of adoption include providing Jody with new clothes. Violet speculates on the joys of knitting sweaters for her and Justina gives money to Jane "for Jody's travelling expenses and clothes suitable for such travelling" (195). Jody's adoption has immediate effects on her wardrobe's breadth.

Jody's new wardrobe is connected with her sudden movement into usefulness. Although she lacks the practical capability of Jane, Jody becomes useful for the emotional role she plays in the lives of the Titus ladies. The Titus ladies are spinsters with little to do but have petty arguments with each other and to care for their beautiful garden. Justina, the elder, is shown to be rather rigidly attached to the past; she still wears her hair in a pompadour "because that is how she wore it when she said good-bye to Alec [her lover who died in the Great War]" (102) and she quarrels with Violet over where they will keep their dead mother's rubber plant, insisting that it

remain in the parlour instead of removing it to the back hall (116). Jody gives the Titus ladies something new to think about outside of themselves, something on which they can agree, and "something young to love" (195). In this way, Jody once again becomes like Anne, bringing love into the lives of old people who have become out-of-touch and stuck in their ways. Jody brings change into their lives even before she arrives. The Titus ladies determine that they "must get a cow" so that Jody can have milk, redecorate a room in the house for her, and potentially also adopt a cat because Jody "loves cats" (195). Jody is thus shown to have the makings of a virtuous heroine as she is adopted into a middle-class household and is shown to be useful, and, as a result, is granted new clothing.

Jane and Jody's usefulness, though different, is connected. Monika Hilder states that Montgomery, through domesticity, "celebrates [a] transcendent ethos of nurture or care as the genuinely heroic way to live" (213). Jane's virtue is manifested in her excellence in caring for others, i.e. her ability to do everything for everyone. Jody becomes virtuous when she becomes an object of care for others, allowing the Titus ladies to become more heroic and nurturing. One also expects that Jody will reciprocate this caring and become a more active heroine in the future. Domesticity links the traits of caring and nurturing with the feminine roles of wife and mother, since wives and mothers were in charge of the domestic sphere and thus responsible for the care of the members of the household. Wifeness and motherhood were the expected roles for women in Montgomery's time. Light and Parr state,

Opportunities were opening for advanced education, and there were more places for women in teaching and medicine, and in new professions with a strong female identification such as nursing and social work. But the proportion of Canadian women

who devoted their lives to child-bearing, child-rearing, and homemaking did not decline [...]. (109)

With so many women in the role of homemaker, Montgomery's popular fiction reflects society's pressure for women to behave in ways that promote proper caring and nurturing feminine behaviour through its celebration of these behaviours. Indeed, Devereux claims that "Anne's whole story, from Green Gables orphan to 'matron' of Ingleside, is one in which motherhood is insistently positioned as the culmination of 'womanly' ambition" ("Writing" 266). Although Hilder and Devereux focus on the *Anne* books, Montgomery promotes an "ethos of nurture" in her other works as well, rewarding characters for their caring behaviour with beautiful clothing or using the gift of beautiful clothing as a symbol of maternal behaviour.

When Valancy leaves her mother's home to become Abel Gay's housekeeper and to care for Cissy Gay, her motives are construed by the narrator as being particularly Christian, in addition to being virtuous. Hilder writes that "Christian heroism espouses nurture" (214) and Montgomery situates Cissy's care within this moral framework. Valancy goes to the Gay household with the remark, "Cissy Gay is dying [...] and it's a shame and disgrace that she is dying in a Christian community with no one to do anything for her" (81). Neglect of Cissy is regarded by both Valancy and Abel as un-Christian behaviour. Abel calls Barney "a Christian" because he "always drops in when he's passing and does anything [Cissy] wants done" including giving her "oranges and flowers and things" (79). Valancy's presence in the Gay household seems to surpass Barney's in virtue, for Cissy tells her, "It — would just be like — heaven — to have some one here — like you [...]" (86), as though Valancy is a ministering angel come to her. Valancy keeps away loneliness for Cissy in addition to keeping the house clean and cooking the meals. More importantly, Valancy also acts as confessor to Cissy, hearing "her poor little story"

of "passion and pain and shame" (199), and watches by Cissy's deathbed, holding her hand as she passes into death (121). In these ways, Valancy nurtures Cissy physically, emotionally, and spiritually, behaving like a true Christian hero. Her care of Cissy is rewarded in a multitude of ways: she gets better acquainted with Barney with whom she falls in love, she gains independence from her oppressive family, and she feels emotionally fulfilled because she is useful to someone. She is also rewarded with money, which may seem a peculiarly worldly reward for good spiritual behaviour, but which is the means through which Valancy is able to obtain her first really beautiful clothes.

While clothing is, like money, an obviously material reward, for Montgomery clothing had a spiritual, divine element as well. Writing about flowers, Montgomery states that she considered "the growth and development of little crinkly brown seeds and ugly bumpy bulbs into rainbows and perfumes" to be a miracle, one that kept "alive [her] belief in God" (*CJLMM 1901-1911* 100). Montgomery associated pretty dress with this natural beauty, considering people to be God's "human flowers" who could "put on bright hues and pretty garments, just as the flowers do" (100). When Valancy wears the new clothes she buys with her first pay, she blooms like a flower. The "crimson rose" in her hat and the green colour of her hat and dress are visual cues that link Valancy's material dress with the spiritual beauty of nature (*BC* 102). The natural look of Valancy's green ensemble is further augmented by the addition of clovers, "great crimson things growing in the long grass" (*BC* 104), with the result that she looks like "a green moonbeam with a gleam of red in it, if there could be such a thing" (105), as Cissy describes it. Valancy's beauty is associated with nature, the moonbeam, but also elevated beyond it, something fantastical, magical, or even divine. This is not to say that Valancy is somehow divine

or God-like, but that her clothing partakes of something more than earthly because it is a reward for spiritually virtuous behaviour.

Green is a colour that often features in Montgomery's novels in connection with clothing. Although none of Montgomery's favourite dresses were ever green (*SJLMM Vol. III* 113), the colour had a particular significance for her because her mother's wedding dress was "the brightest, vividest green imaginable" (32).<sup>3</sup> Montgomery's mother was a mysterious figure to her because she had died when Montgomery was a young child. Montgomery's fears that her mother might have been a prosaic, unsympathetic person were one day alleviated by one of her mother's girlhood friends who told Montgomery that she had been "a beautiful, spiritual poetical girl full of fine emotions and noble impulses" (*CJLMM 1901-1911* 117). After this, Montgomery could indulge in the comforting notion, which she considered a "talisman to make life beautiful," that her mother "would have understood — *she* would have sympathized" (117). Green dresses are thus associated with loving behaviour and emotional care in Montgomery's fictional worlds. Anne is given a green "evening dress" by Marilla and it is linked to Anne's caring nature. After trying it on and reciting for Matthew and Marilla, Matthew states, "She's smart and pretty, and loving, too which is better than all the rest. She's been a blessing to us, and there never was a luckier mistake than what Mrs. Spencer made — if it *was* luck. I don't believe it was any such thing. It was Providence, because the Almighty saw we needed her, I reckon" (*AGG* 360). Anne's emotional and spiritual benefit to the Cuthberts mirrors that of Valancy's to Cissy; she makes their lives more beautiful.

While beautiful clothing could be a reward for virtuous, caring behaviour, the act of giving beautiful clothing can also be perceived as an act of virtuous, caring behaviour, one that is

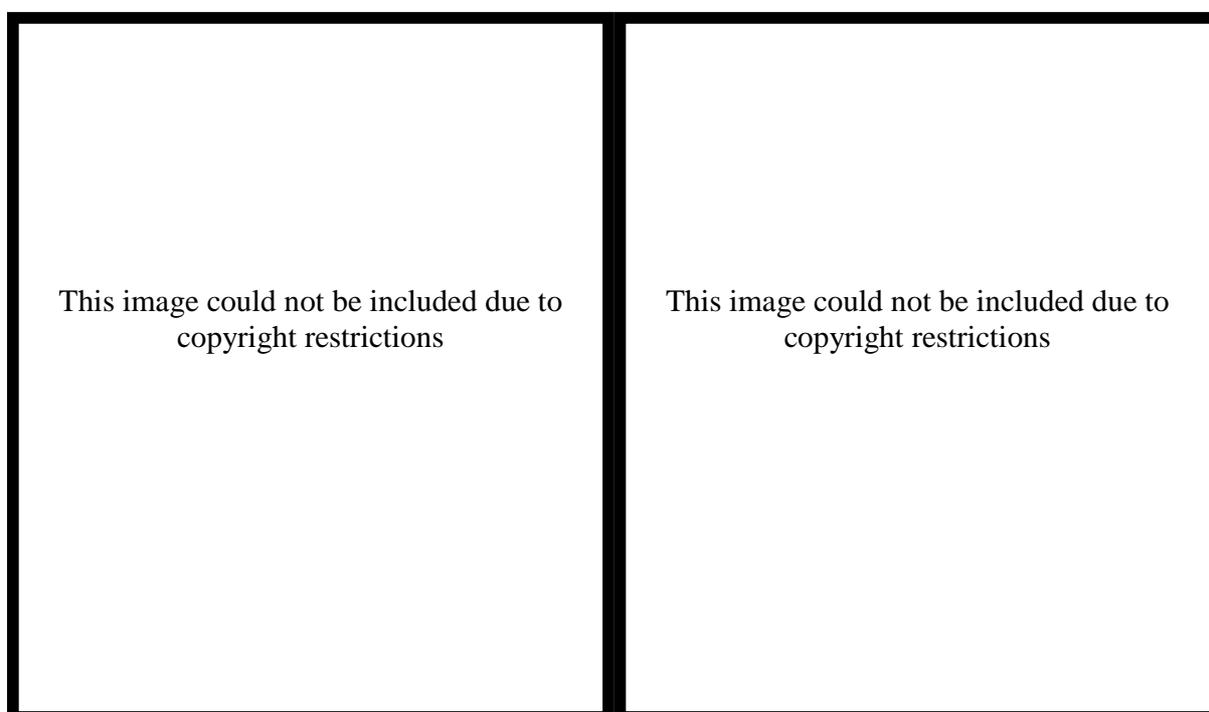
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<sup>3</sup> Montgomery had intentions to make the dress over with a "black lace overdress to tone it down" (*SJLMM Vol. III* 33), in the same fashion that Carry does with her Aunt Caroline's bright silk dress, but never did.

often construed as a maternal act. Clothing can be symbolic of maternal care in its capacity for "physical protection" (Storm 63). The way in which clothing shelters the body echoes the way in which Montgomery's good mother figures shelter and protect those under their care. Clothing becomes a physical manifestation of maternal emotions. It is of note that in Montgomery's fiction characters who exhibit maternal caring are frequently characters who are not actual mothers. Hilder pays particular attention to the way in which Matthew "exercises the role of unconditional love and grace in Anne's life" (218) and "from the start regards Anne with an unconditional caring attitude, as a human being whom he ought to nurture" (222). And much of *Anne of Green Gables* focuses on the way in which Marilla learns to become a proper mother figure, one who, like Matthew, nurtures Anne and provides her with beautiful clothing.

The maternal role played by Marilla when she purchases the green material for Anne's evening dress is mirrored in "Penelope's Party Waist" (1904) with elder sister Doris' determination that Penelope have something beautiful to wear. Doris is described as a natural homemaker with "housewifely gifts, which had small chance of flowering out in her business life" ("Penelope" 158). Although her homemaking talents may be thwarted by poverty and the need to work, Doris still acts in a way that stabilizes and maintains the home, in addition to providing clothing for Penelope, the younger sister in her care: "her small salary as typewriter in an uptown office [ran] their tiny establishment and [kept] Penelope in school dresses" (158). Doris' worry over Penelope's health and well-being, which is being tried by hard studies and upcoming examinations, motivates her desire to see Penelope go to Blanche Anderson's party and have "a good, jolly time to hearten her up" (158). The arrival of the quilt, a textile, like clothing, used for protection and covering, provides the material which Doris can transform into a different symbol of nurture: a beautiful party waist which will help restore Penelope's spirits.

The quilt (see Figure 3.1) is given to them by their Aunt Adella and was made by their Grandmother Hunter, a reiteration of the theme of female inheritance seen in *Jane of Lantern Hill* and "Aunt Caroline's Silk Dress". As a consequence of Penelope's presence at the party, the girls gain a new mother figure, in the form of Aunt Esther, with the result that there will be "no more contriving party waists out of old silk linings" (164) because Aunt Esther can afford to keep them well-dressed. The provision of clothing becomes the primary determinant of proper maternal care.



**Figure 2.1: "Crazy Quilt." A silk quilt from the 1880s with a more restrained lining (right) than front (left).  
(The Metropolitan Museum of Art)**

Although many of Montgomery's mother figures are portrayed positively in their ability to care and nurture, particularly through the provision of clothing, Montgomery also created mother figures who are deeply problematic. As Rothwell observes, "Not all the mother figures in *Green Gables* are ideals" (135), citing Mrs. Hammond, Mrs. Thomas, and Mrs. Blewett as examples. The representation of problematic motherhood carries over into Montgomery's other

works, most notably *Jane of Lantern Hill* where the problems are augmented in their presentation of actual mothers. Rothwell claims, "The central mothers in *Jane of Lantern Hill* do not inspire admiration for maternal values as earlier Montgomery characters do: mother figures are repressive and controlling or weak and helpless, suggesting a crisis within maternal feminism" (141). Rothwell attributes this change to "post-war malaise and the disillusionment and frustration many Canadian women felt after suffrage was attained and the war won" when "many of the freedoms and new rights women had earned underwent a reversal" (140). The optimism of the role of mothers in nation-building before the Great War, personified in mother figures like Miss Stacy and Mrs. Allen in *Anne of Green Gables*, is lost. Gone are the jaunty "conductorettes," with their purposeful work and functional, yet attractive, outfits, and in their place are women, like Robin, who are "all dressed up with nowhere to go". The burdensome layers of clothing that grandmother gives to Robin are a perversion of the motherly care that characters like Marilla and Doris give to Anne and Penelope. Instead of nurturing Robin, grandmother promotes her unhappiness: "[...] away back in [Jane's] mind, there was lurking a queer suspicion that mother, in spite of her dances and dinners and furs and dresses and jewels and friends, wasn't happy. Jane couldn't imagine why she had this idea. Perhaps a look in on mother's eyes now and then ... *like something shut up in a cage*" (*JLH* 19 emphasis added). Clothing, a symbolic representation of grandmother's unhealthy, possessive feelings for Robin, is no longer the protective shelter that it is in "Penelope's Party Waist;" it becomes overprotective, entrapping and physically binding, when given by grandmother. In contrast with grandmother's excess of clothing and maternal focus, Robin provides no clothing or real care for Jane. When Jane receives her invitation from her father to return to the Island and insists upon going, despite

her mother and grandmother's wishes to the contrary, Robin temporarily attempts to distance herself emotionally from Jane:

[Robin] went out, leaving Jane with a heart that was almost breaking. Never in her life had mother spoken to her in that hard, brittle tone. She felt as if she had been suddenly pushed far, far away from her. [...] Jane rushed to her room, flung herself down on the big white bearskin, and writhed in a tearless agony no child should ever have to suffer. (162)

Robin, instead of providing emotional support for her daughter, is the cause of emotional trauma. She rejects the role of maternal caregiver, pushing away Jane, who is suffering from divided loyalties, and privileging her own suffering instead of that of her child. Robin is also fairly uninvolved in dressing Jane; she does not labour, like Doris, to keep Jane in clothes.

Grandmother usually picks out and buys Jane's clothing. Even when Jane and Robin go shopping together for Jane's second trip, it is under the orders of grandmother who tells "mother to buy what clothes ... if *any* ... were necessary for Jane" (166). However, Robin's passive maternity is not overtly criticized, nor is Robin villainized for her behaviour, perhaps because, in the end, she is redeemed; she breaks away from the suffocating influence of her mother in order to care for her child.

The movement toward disillusionment with maternal feminism that Rothwell finds in Montgomery's books, traced through the increasingly negative portrayals of motherhood, is correlated with a decreased importance of fashion in Montgomery's works over time. If, as Diana Crane asserts, clothing is a feminine expression of power (100), then one might read the participation of women in fashion, or adherence to clothing norms amongst Canadian women, in Montgomery's fiction as another assertion of the power of maternal feminism on the nation. *Anne of Green Gables*, *The Blue Castle*, and *Jane of Lantern Hill* portray a decreasing presence

of female influence in nation-building, i.e. maternal feminism, through heroines who are increasingly isolated in the domestic sphere and who are decreasingly interested in the wider world, a world partially represented by fashion. In a journal entry dated 1933, Montgomery noted her own diminished interest in fashion: "But I seem to care nothing for fashions now. The ceaseless changes seem absurd. Women should wear a uniform after they are fifty" (*SJLMM Vol. IV* 231). Later characters' lack of interaction with a world outside of the domestic sphere prohibit the movement of positive domestic morals into the public sphere. The unified appearance of characters who do dress fashionably or conventionally also signals a strong visual female presence in the nation. In this context fashion functions in several different ways: as a symbol of feminine influence in nation building, as a symbol of interest on the part of the wearer in the world outside of the domestic sphere, and as a means of conformity and unity among the women of the nation.

Anne, Montgomery's earliest heroine, is the most interested in fashion and dressing fashionably. Irene Gammel states, "Anne's love of fashion is central, and the fashion symbol that may stand out the most in the reader's memory is the glorious puffed sleeve dress" (178). Anne defines fashionable clothing for the reader, remarking "Puffed sleeves are so fashionable now" (*AGG* 128) and debating with Diana the merits of the white organdy over the more-fashionable "blue-flowered muslin" (347). The reader is made aware of Anne's constant alertness as to what is considered fashionable by her frequent mentions of it and her joy and relief when she receives her puffed sleeve dress while "puffed sleeves are still fashionable" (272). Being fashionable has a psychological effect on Anne; it can create "a comfortable feeling deep down in [her] mind" (330). However, it is noteworthy that Anne's satisfaction in fashionable dress is something that should be considered quite separate from the delight she takes in beautiful things. Anne states,

"I'd rather look ridiculous when everybody else does than plain and sensible all by myself" (128). Aesthetics are not Anne's concern when it comes to fashion.

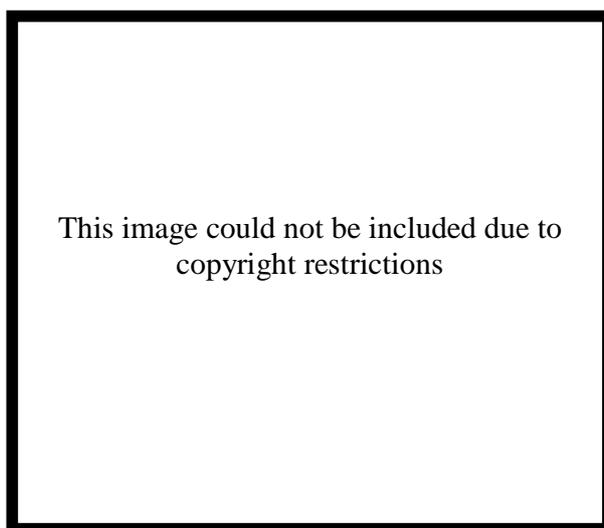
Montgomery's later heroine Valancy takes a different view of fashionable clothing: she is interested in fashionable clothing because of its aesthetic qualities and ability to create beauty. However, she later disregards fashion and its dictates in favour of clothing that suits her personal aesthetic. At the beginning of the novel, part of Valancy's oppression is comprised of an unfashionable appearance. Valancy desires to change the pompadour hairstyle which "had long gone out of fashion" (*BC* 13), but Aunt Wellington refuses to allow it. Valancy had also "never had a dress with low neck and elbow sleeves, although they had been worn, even in Deerwood, for over a year" (48). While unfashionable clothing is associated with ugliness, beauty gets redefined to become something distinct from fashion. Fashionable, beautiful Olive is later judged by Valancy to be "without the slightest touch of distinction", while Olive cannot help but notice that Valancy's "outlandish dress" and "queer hat" have something "that was entirely lacking in her own attire" (139-140). Valancy discards ideals about what is fashionable and what is not and focuses instead on what suits her, what brings out her own individual beauty. This disregard for fashion is most clearly shown in her decision to bob her hair, "a wild, unheard-of proceeding" (149). The narrator states, "Valancy might never be beautiful, but she was of the type that looks its best in the woods — elfin — mocking — alluring" (150). Valancy's personal style is one that cannot be accounted for within the dictates of fashion; fashion must be let go as something that has lost its relevance for Valancy.

Jane, Montgomery's last-created heroine, is completely unconcerned with fashion in dress. The word fashion is used almost solely in connection with houses, generally describing them as "old-fashioned," with the two exceptions of the mention of the "rich old-fashioned rings" worn

by grandmother (9) and Little Aunt Em's old-fashioned method of dyeing rags (119). Mentions of fashion are also confined to being "old-fashioned" as opposed to fashionable. Fashion has become something old or outdated and thus no longer useful for Jane. The association between fashion and the past in *Jane of Lantern Hill* links fashion to a potentially problematic inability to change or adapt. However, Jane is not positioned as anti-fashion in the way that some of Montgomery's characters are, like Marilla, actively choosing to wear unfashionable clothing, but as simply indifferent to fashion in dress and any meaning it might hold. With Jane the separation between fashion and beauty is once again evident, for Jane is very concerned with beautiful dress and dress that makes one feel beautiful, as in the case of her green silk dress (39), without ever considering the influence of fashion.

Change in the centrality of fashion within these novels correlates with changes in the amount of influence Montgomery's heroines exercise on others. Montgomery's heroines' influence over other characters, the people who make up Canada, is generally for good, in keeping with the idea that maternal feminism was based in nurturing and morality (Cook and Mitchinson 224). Anne has an almost boundless positive influence on those around her. Shirley Foster and Judy Simons remark that Anne "has an effect on her surroundings, producing a change of heart or outlook on those who began as her antagonists" (153). While Anne's presence has an impact on a number of people, it is significant that several of them respond to her influence with the gift of fashionable clothing. Anne's influence on Matthew and Marilla and their responses to her influence with clothing is discussed above, but Anne has a similar impact on other characters: Mrs. Lynde and Miss Josephine Barry. Anne's apology to Mrs. Lynde for her outburst when Mrs. Lynde comments on her looks quickly changes Mrs. Lynde's attitude toward her: "She only perceived that Anne had made a very thorough apology and all resentment

vanished from her kindly, if somewhat officious, heart" (AGG 123). Mrs. Lynde changes from an offended matron to a kindly friend to Anne and later proves her friendship to Anne by making up her puffed sleeve dress. Anne also has a positive effect on "thin, prim, and rigid" (221) Miss Barry. Anne's confession that it was her idea to jump on the spare room bed in which Miss Barry had been sleeping the previous night transforms the "snap" in her eyes into "a twinkle of amused interest" (222). Miss Barry also acknowledges to herself, "If I'd a child like Anne in the house all the time I'd be a better and happier woman" (311); such is the effect that Anne has on others. Miss Barry sends Anne "the daintiest little kid slippers, with beaded toes and satin bows and glistening buckles" (274). An illustration from a 1896 publication of the fashion magazine *Harper's Bazar* depicts a variety of evening slippers that are similar to Anne's with bows and beading and buckles ("Needlework and Fashions" 44 and "Finishing Touches" n.p.), speaking to the fashionableness of Anne's new slippers (see Figure 3.2). In *Anne of Green Gables*, fashionable clothing is a mark of Anne's ability to transform others into more understanding and, presumably, better people.



**Figure 3.2**"Evening Slippers." Fashionable evening slippers of the 1890s like those Anne received from Miss Josephine Barry. (*Vintage Victorian*)

Valancy's influence on people is less broad and straightforward. With the exception of Barney<sup>4</sup>, Valancy is unable to really change or alter people; presumably this is why Valancy does not receive the gifts of fashionable clothing that Anne does. Only Barney gives Valancy an item of dress, but the pearl necklace is not necessarily an item associated with fashion; the fact that Valancy has desired a necklace of pearls all her life indicates its lack of fashionableness. Her disconnection with fashion and fashionable dress reflects her limited influence on those around her. Anne may have an effect on everyone she meets, but Valancy's influence is restricted to those with whom she has close contact, the people she lives with: Barney and her mother. It is after half a year of marriage that Valancy effects a change in Barney: "It struck Valancy more than once that Barney himself laughed a great deal oftener than he used to and that his laugh had changed. It had become wholesome. She rarely heard the little cynical note in it now" (*BC* 167). Valancy, in her role as a nurturing and caring wife, has had a "wholesome" influence on Barney. She re-establishes what Cook and Mitchinson call "the well-being of the family, that gauge of society's health" (225). Valancy's power to change people comes with her own change in outlook. On the occasion of Uncle Herbert and Aunt Alberta's anniversary dinner, when the Stirling clan is first made aware of Valancy's altered behaviour, Mrs. Frederick Stirling's behaviour also alters. She is already aware that something has changed in Valancy and restrains herself from commenting on Valancy's new hairstyle: "It was so important that Valancy should be kept in good humour, if possible, until it was over. Mrs. Frederick did not reflect that this was the first time in her life that she had thought it necessary to consider Valancy's humours. But then Valancy had never been 'queer' before" (48-49). After twenty-nine years, Valancy finally creates a minor change in her mother's personality and outlook. This change is augmented when Mrs. Frederick learns the truth of Barney's identity. When Valancy returns home, Uncle Benjamin

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<sup>4</sup> Valancy's care of Cissy changes the remainder of Cissy's life, but does not alter who Cissy is.

orders Mrs. Frederick to be "very kind and sympathetic" and she does "her best" to be so, even though "[i]t was something of a large order to expect Mrs. Frederick to be kind and sympathetic" (204). The humour of the situation and Mrs. Frederick's lack of sincerity indicate that Mrs. Frederick's alteration is not of the same sort as Barney's, or the alterations in people that Anne is able to create. Valancy's powers of change are weaker than Anne's. She influences fewer people, less genuinely. At heart, most of the people around Valancy remain the same.

Jane has even less influence over other characters; they almost all stay the same throughout the novel. The only change that Jane is able to enact is to better the life of Jody by suggesting her adoption to the Titus ladies, and this act has no real effect on the character of either Jody or the Titus ladies, who are depicted positively throughout the novel. Although she might wish to change grandmother for the better, at the end of the novel grandmother is still the "bitter old queen, her eyes bright with venom" (*JLH* 217). The only character who is changed is Robin and this alteration comes about through Jane's passivity, her illness, rather than any action on Jane's part. Fashion has almost no role in *Jane of Lantern Hill*, present only in the form of being "old-fashioned" as noted above. Although it is assumed that the expensive clothing grandmother buys for Jane at Marlborough's and for Robin is fashionable, there is a noteworthy absence of the terms fashion or fashionable in conjunction with these clothes and shopping experiences, particularly in comparison with their presence in Montgomery's other novels. This absence seems to associate the lack of fashion with the powerlessness and oppression experienced by Jane and Robin while grandmother buys their clothing.

The intent of maternal feminism was to take the moral goodness exhibited by women in the domestic sphere to a broader community. While all of Montgomery's heroines of her domestic fiction are expected to be, or to become, competent homemakers and housekeepers,

some of them have a greater interest and awareness of a wider world outside of the domestic sphere. Anne is deeply engaged with the world outside of the home. Although she is prevented from actively participating in several public spheres, such as politics, because of her age, she still expresses interest in and comments on such issues. Susan Drain states, "Avonlea is not only open to the larger world; it is closely bound to it" (18), citing the visit of the Canadian Premier to P.E.I. as an example. Drain goes on to remark that Anne's connection to this event "is not a direct one" (18) since she does not attend the political rally, but Anne is still engaged in politics, however indirectly. She declares a political loyalty to the Conservative party, in spite of being unable to vote (AGG 201), discusses Mrs. Lynde's political views on suffrage (201), and enthusiastically asks Marilla to describe the Premier (207). Anne's interest in politics is unusual; Cook and Mitchinson state, "The proper sphere of women was not politics" (224), but Anne is unable to remain solely within "the proper sphere" of the home. Other, less unconventional, pursuits take Anne out of the domestic sphere. Anne's trip to Charlottetown and the Exhibition puts her in contact with a much larger world than Green Gables, a place with horse-racing, hot air balloons (AGG 309), prima donnas, and restaurants (310), and which warrants a fashionable wardrobe (306). Tellingly, Anne worries that Marilla will object as she has before to Anne's excursions on the grounds that Anne would "be better at home" instead of "gadding about" (304); Marilla voices the traditional conventions about a woman's place. Although Anne comes to the conclusion after her visit that she much prefers life at home to life in the big city, this does not prevent Anne from continuing to make excursions into the world, whether at White Sands for hotel concerts or Charlottetown to attend Queen's. Interestingly, considering her interests outside the home, Anne is also shown to be frequently incompetent in the home, excepting her ability to care for babies, a skill that Devereux points to as evidence for Anne's "motherliness" ("Writing"

264), the foundation of maternal feminism. Anne's later assertion of household competence, "I shall attend to the ironing and baking beautifully — you needn't fear that I'll starch the handkerchiefs or flavour the cake with liniment" (AGG 384), is followed soon after by her renunciation of the larger world, represented by Redmond College, in favour of the home and Marilla. However, this renunciation is only temporary; Anne has plans to continue her studies at home (392) and will eventually earn enough by teaching to put herself through college in the third book of the series, *Anne of the Island*.

Valancy's interests are confined within a much narrower sphere than Anne's, although, at the end of the book, Valancy is poised to travel the globe. Valancy's primary engagement with the larger world takes place through the books of John Foster, books which have "put Canada on the literary map of the world" (203). Valancy is connected to the international audience that reads John Foster's books through her own readership. However, the revelation that John Foster is actually Barney partially repositions Valancy's interest as local, since the books are written about Mistawis, where they live. Valancy's interests are mainly domestic; following her dreams, she becomes the housekeeper of two different homes in succession: Abel Gay's and Barney's. At Abel's she is able to revel in domesticity: "If she found satisfaction in cleaning dirty rooms she got her fill of it there" (87); and she is shown to be proficient in this role: "Valancy was a good cook" (87). Barney's home becomes Valancy's Blue Castle, the earthly realization of her fantasy, and she scorns involvement with a wider society to remain isolated there:

Once they did go to a masquerade dance in the pavilion at one of the hotels up the lake, [...] but slipped away in their canoe, before unmasking time, back to the Blue Castle.

'It was lovely — but I don't want to go again,' said Valancy.

Valancy simply prefers to stay at home. Following the family logic of not spending money on things that the public does not see (3), Valancy's lack of public life dictates that she has no need to outlay money for fashionable clothing; as stated above, even her pretty clothing is not fashionable and not intended for public wear, such as her "smoke-blue chiffon which she always put on when they spent the evenings at home" (156-157). However, at the end of the novel, Valancy's circumstances change and she realizes that she must live, albeit somewhat reluctantly, in a wider sphere because she is the wife of a famous author and the daughter-in-law of a millionaire. This new status prompts the need for "a little house somewhere outside" (216) the cosmopolitan city of Montreal and a wedding tour through Europe. Valancy gains a life that the fashionable Olive envies, but enters into it with tears of sadness for the necessity of leaving, even temporarily, her Blue Castle behind.

Jane has no such qualms about leaving her beloved Lantern Hill at the end of the novel, not because she is less emotionally attached to her home, but because of her "superior" homemaking abilities that allow her to make a home wherever she goes. Epperly states, "[...] Jane's love of home is really an uncomplicated delight in her individual expression of domestic worship. Jane will, no doubt go on to love many, many houses. Her talent is in recognizing magic and then going to work to create home comforts around it" (223). The home is Jane's world and her centre of power; it is something that she takes along with her regardless of where she goes. However, Jane's deep investment in the home leaves little room for interest in anything else. In *Jane of Lantern Hill*, one can see a reactionary response to the negative effects of world events embodied by the First World War. Rothwell observes the literary trend following the war toward "works that were darker and more serious, presenting a struggle against forces that increasingly threatened home, tradition, and security" (140). Jane is presented as a bastion

against these forces in her isolated domesticity, but her narrowness of situation leaves her unknowing and uncaring of the larger world. When she reads *Saturday Evening* at Phyllis' house the narrator states,

[...] she was not in the least interested in the society pages, the photographs of brides and debutantes, the stock market or even in the article, *Peaceful Adjustment of International Difficulties*, by Kenneth Howard which was given a place of honour on the front page.

[...] Jane was not interested in Norman Tait nor any other screen star. (*JLH* 34)

Anne would have read it all and had an opinion on all of it, from debutantes to international difficulties to screen stars, but Jane cares only for the picture of Kenneth Howard, who is later revealed to be her father, because his face looks familiar. The "affair of the picture" (33) reveals Jane's essential interest in the family/familiar, a feminine "trend" that "hardened into a 'natural' role for women" (Cook and Mitchinson 6). Although her father often writes about world events and is well-read, Jane presents a stark contrast; Jane's ignorance is frequently presented coupled with a lack of interest. Following a remark of her father's about a landlady thinking "the violet ray is a girl," the narrator remarks, "The violet ray might have been a girl for anything Jane knew to the contrary ... or cared" (*JLH* 70). Even when her father attempts to broaden her horizons by teaching her about history and geography, Jane remains grounded in the domestic. She "sew[s] buttons on dad's shirts" all through the lessons (113) and her interest is piqued in these topics only after her father makes them seem familiar to her:

Thebes ... Babylon ... Tyre [...] were places where real folks lived ... folks she *knew*.

And, knowing them, it was easy to be interested in everything pertaining to them.

Geography, which had once meant merely a map of the world, was just as fascinating.

[...] Soon Jane knew all the fair lands far, far away as she knew Lantern Hill [...]. (112-113)

Jane is so invested in the domestic sphere that she cannot be bothered to think about anything unrelated to it, including fashionable clothing. As noted above, concerns about fashion are almost entirely connected with the houses where Jane lives, such as Lantern Hill and the old-fashioned mansions on Gay Street, not clothing, further diminishing the connection between fashion and the outside world and transforming fashion into something primarily domestic.

Contradictorily, fashion's association with a wider world outside the domestic sphere can also reinforce customs and norms. David and Wahl also note the contradictory nature of fashion (39). Storm observes that "fashion enhances our freedom to differentiate by choosing clothes that express our 'individual moods, tastes, and esthetic propensities' while also limiting it by forcing us to stay within the limits of the alternatives of fashionable dress (Ellis 1962, p. 58)" (331). Conformity to fashion creates a unity of appearance that is dictated by the "limits" of fashion. By dressing similarly, individuals become a cohesive group. Storm states, "The individual is reminded by his dress of the expectations and norms of the group. He will feel the group's approval and acceptance of him and his dress. This helps to strengthen intragroup ties" (115). Thus, the determination of Montgomery's Canadian female characters to dress fashionably, symbolizing their desire to belong to a larger community, could be considered a commitment on their part to create a unified female national presence.

Anne's desire to dress fashionably is portrayed as a way of belonging within her peer group. Her first interaction with the neighbourhood girls at Sunday school portrays Anne dressed as an outsider; Anne's plain sleeves and the wreath of flowers in her hat contrast with all the other "gaily attired" (AGG 129) girls in their puffed sleeves with "bouquets pinned on their

dresses" (135) and "artificial flowers on their hats" (136). While the difference in flowers can be considered in the light of Anne's greater connection to nature and natural beauty, the difference in sleeves becomes a significant symbol of a difference that is, as Matthew later notes, "something that should not exist" (265). Even Anne's powerful imagination cannot do away with this difference: "I tried to imagine mine were puffed, too, but I couldn't" (132). Anne's deep-seated desire to belong, discussed in Chapter One as being so powerful that Anne is willing to efface other parts of her nature, prompts her "yearning for puffed sleeves" (Gammel 181). David and Wahl state, "Despite what Marilla may have thought, puffed sleeves were not simply a frivolous luxury or a waste of fabric, but a necessary part of conforming to Victorian social codes, even if, as Anne puts it, these codes mean looking as 'ridiculous' as everyone else" (41). Anne is willing to forgo her aesthetic sensibilities and devotion to beauty, by looking "ridiculous," if it means she can belong. However, puffed sleeves are not the only instance of fashionable dress in the novel associated with belonging. Anne's pale green evening dress is prompted by Marilla's desire to help Anne belong: "I hear that Jane and Ruby and Josie have got 'evening dresses' as they call them, and I don't mean you shall be behind them" (357). This dress is intended to keep Anne on the same level, not only as her peers from Avonlea, but also the other scholars that Anne will be meeting at Queen's. Anne's need to belong within a wider community is signalled by Marilla's observation that the dress makes Anne "look so tall and stylish" that she looks as though she "didn't belong in Avonlea at all" (358). The connection between fashion and the wider world allows Anne to belong to more places than just rural Avonlea.

In contrast, Valancy prefers to belong to a much smaller society, comprised of just a few select individuals. Although at first envious of the fashionable Olive and the position she

commands within the Stirling family and the larger Deerwood community, Valancy eventually abandons her attempts to get along in this society at the same time she abandons the desire for fashionable dress. Her desire for belonging narrows to the company of three individuals: Abel Gay, Cissy Gay, and Barney, and later becomes even narrower with the death of Cissy. Barney becomes the only society she really cares for as evidenced by her "little, disagreeable, haunting dread" that he might not really like her and her overwhelming joy when she realizes that he does (173-174). Her emotional reactions toward her family are much more mild and often indifferent. She is sorry when she fights with her mother, but only because "[t]hings would be so uncomfortable until she was forgiven" (32), not because of any fear of emotional separation between them. Her quickness to move away to the isolated area known as "up back" also speaks to Valancy's disinclination to belong. Valancy's desired position is revealed in her happy declaration that she and Barney are "outlaws" (173), people living outside of society and outside of conformity to its rules.

Jane is presented as having a passive role with regard to belonging, neither choosing to fit in nor refusing to do so. Although aware at the beginning of the novel that she does not fit in with her family or school peers and finding it regrettable, Jane does very little to remedy this situation. In the "affair of the picture," grandmother's statement that "people who belong here do not read *Saturday Evening*" (38) positions Jane, and the people she will later belong with such as her father, outside of the world of 60 Gay Street. Jane's reluctant reply, "I don't belong here" (38), is an admission but also a realization that prompts an attempt to belong. The unlucky recitation is Jane's small effort to belong in the world of 60 Gay by making her grandmother proud of her, but its failure and the invitation to P.E.I. that immediately follows put an end to any more such attempts. Belonging is simply not important enough to Jane to motivate a change in self. When

she visits the Island, Jane need make no effort to belong; her belonging is automatic, something she is born with. Her father claims, "Jane and I are both owls of the desert and pelicans of the wilderness. But we both like onions so we hit it off together" (97); their genetic closeness seems to ensure their compatibility. However, Jane's sense of belonging is not limited to immediate family members. For Jane, on the Island, "[i]t seemed as if everyone she met was sealed of her tribe" (86). Her friendships are effortless and made with a wide variety of people, from the young Jimmy Johns to old Uncle Tombstone. This is partially accounted for by the fact that Jane was born on P.E.I., as though an Island birth somehow endows one with "nice"-ness (92), the primary characteristic promoting belonging. Jane does not need Anne's influence over other people in order to make them like her; the magic of the Island changes Jane so that she is inherently likeable and need expend no effort into belonging. Jane suddenly belongs everywhere: "She had always felt vaguely left out ... excluded ... at St. Agatha's. Now, for some reason unknown to her, she no longer felt so. It was as if she had become a comrade and a leader overnight" (148). Jane's passivity with regard to her ability to belong raises questions about the agency of women in their participation in nation-building. Her lack of active decision-making and her narrow association within the domestic sphere are reminiscent of an earlier Victorian model of femininity, in which maternal feminism played no part.

Montgomery's portrayals of Canadian womanhood are concerned with both ideals and reality. She depicts possible models for Canadian women to aspire to, while simultaneously tracking changes in national moods. However, Montgomery's ideal models are problematic in their narrow definition of who can be considered virtuous, even while they exalt everyday, practical virtues. Montgomery is most inclusive in her praise of nurturing and caring characters, who are not restricted by labels of biological motherhood, but extend to a wide variety of mother

figures, including men and children. While Montgomery presents a range of admirable mother figures, their connection to ideas of maternal feminism creates issues as the efficacy of mothers is challenged by world events such as World War I. Clothing and fashion act as signposts in Montgomery's fiction to point out dominant ideologies and to track changes in them. Virtues are made clear by their rewards of beautiful clothing, while problematic behaviour is evidenced by the negative effect clothing has on the wearer. Women's participation in shaping the nation through maternal feminism is reflected in their interest in fashion. In looking at Montgomery's fiction over time, it is evident that Montgomery, as a popular writer, was strongly aware of the changing moods of the nation and tailored her fiction and its depiction of womanhood to suit those moods.

### Conclusion

"[...] I shall never be indifferent to dress. It is a very foolish woman who is — just as foolish as the one who makes it the foremost and only thing. Both are badly mistaken" (*SJLMM Vol. III* 114), declares L.M. Montgomery. Certainly Montgomery was concerned with the dress of her female characters, frequently using it as a mechanism to shed light on their characters, motivations, and actions. In Montgomery's fiction, clothing functions most often as a tool for assertions of power, reinforcing the idea of dress as a feminine, non-verbal expression of power (Crane 100). Clothing itself seems to hold power as characters, such as Miss Ponsonby, become empowered after donning certain clothes. However, the power embodied in clothing may also be an imposition on the wearer, forcing the wearer to be subject to the purchaser of the clothing, as in the case of Robin and her mother. Clothing as fashion, with its links to cultural influence and time-sensitivity, can also be a symbol of other forms of power, such as political power and the power to change and adapt to new situations.

The concept of change in relation to dress is especially interesting, not only because of the convenient pun in the phrase "changing clothes," but also because of the ways in which Montgomery connects change and dress. In her fiction, changes in dress are linked to changes in character and in situation. As her characters grow and mature, the clothing they wear mirrors this growth; Anne puts on long skirts as she gets older (*AGG* 324) and Valancy wears more sexually-provocative clothing when she breaks away from her family (*BC* 102-103). New attitudes also inspire clothing changes: Marilla buys Anne a green evening dress of her own prerogative when she becomes more emotionally available (*AGG* 357) and Jane is frequently portrayed wearing overalls when she becomes comfortable and confident in her life on the Island. In these cases, changes in dress signal a significant change in the character to the reader, but a change in

situation can also prompt a change in dress. When Anne and Jody are adopted, both girls quickly receive new clothing from their adoptive parents; their new status as daughters warrants a new, improved wardrobe. A change for the worse also has an impact on dress; the Lea girls have fewer and less pretty clothes than they had before the death of their parents. Montgomery was unnerved by the changes that occurred throughout her lifetime, but in her fiction she uses clothing as a tool to help her characters deal with difficult situations.<sup>5</sup> Dresses, such as Anne's puffed sleeve dress and Penelope's waist in the form of a quilt lining, come at opportune moments. In her journal, Montgomery states, "I am very fond of pretty dresses" (*SJLMM Vol. II* 393); her fond feelings toward pretty clothing and their emotional and psychological effects are duplicated through the experiences of her female characters.

There are many other aspects of clothing in Montgomery's work that I wished to investigate, but were outside the scope of this project. In connection with feminism and fashion, it would be useful to explore Montgomery's depiction of female characters who take a decisive stance against fashion, like Marilla, or who exhibit their anti-fashion position by wearing masculine clothing, like Little Aunt Em, and their negative or positive portrayal. Masculine dress makes frequent appearances in Montgomery's fiction and much scholarly work might be done on its meaning, especially because so many of her characters who wear articles of men's clothing are social outcasts and outsiders, such as Peg Bowen in *The Story Girl* (1911). The presence or absence of mentions of undergarments in Montgomery's works is also interesting, particularly in connection with sexuality and morality. "Their Girl Josie" (1906) and *The Blue Castle* (1926) both make reference to lingerie and undergarments, and even *Jane of Lantern Hill* (1937) has a mention of "undervests" (82), but this is a topic that is neglected in *Anne of Green Gables* (1908)

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<sup>5</sup> See *Rilla of Ingleside*, in which Anne's youngest daughter's endurance of trials and tribulations during World War I are frequently accompanied by mentions of clothing that she wears.

in spite of the numerous mentions of Anne's other clothes; in comparison with Montgomery's other novels, its absence becomes conspicuous, particularly considering the numerous layers of undergarments Anne would be expected to wear in the 1890s.

My own investigation of Montgomery's portrayal of sexuality and morality yielded some surprising results. Although Montgomery is often considered a writer of children's books, her fiction promotes and applauds efforts to appear attractive and sexually available. However, Montgomery does not go to the lengths of her literary contemporaries when writing about sex; she is careful to confine sexual attractiveness to suggestive clothing intended to secure a suitable husband. Characters who show too much, like Olive, are criticized; such vulgarity is not acceptable to Montgomery. Montgomery also rewrites earlier paradigms concerning dress and the sin of vanity. In Montgomery's fiction, dress' positive effects outweigh the dangers of women thinking too much about their appearance. The quote that opens this conclusion highlights Montgomery's attitude toward the importance of thinking about dress, even while she admonishes giving dress too much importance. On the spectrum of caring about dress, it is only the two extremes that are unacceptable to Montgomery; as her characters show, there is a wide range of appropriate interest in dress, from Anne, who often thinks about her clothes, to Marilla, who learns to care about the clothing of others in addition to benefitting from the psychological effects of her own dress. In her characters, Montgomery promotes thinking about dress because of the ability of clothing to better the wearer and, thus, the world.

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