

Marilla's Flawed and Mutual Motherhood in *Anne of Green Gables*

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Kim, Damsil. "Marilla's Flawed and Mutual Motherhood in *Anne of Green Gables*." *Studies in English Language & Literature* 43.4 (2017): 35-51. This paper suggests Marilla's motherhood and her relationship with Anne is not as controlling as the majority of people thought it to be. In many studies, Marilla was considered to be the demolisher of Anne's wild characteristic and a definite cause of Anne's conformity. Whether or not Anne truly was pruned down and conformed is controversial in the field of literature analysis, whereas Marilla was always seen as the antagonist of Anne's romantic and wild nature. In this paper, Marilla is seen as a friend of Anne rather than a controlling mother who has a cold and brutal power over Anne's transformative changes. The focus of this paper is the transformation of Marilla as well as her unique form of motherhood and her inner transformation. (Yonsei University)

Key Words: Marilla, Motherhood, transformational character, motherhood of Avonlea, 19 century motherhood norms

I. Introduction

There may be many reasons why readers love *Anne of Green Gables* but seeing Anne Shirley who is many faceted, manifold, and complicated character and witnessing this endearing character growing up are some of many pleasures this book offers. As Anne notes "There's such a lot of different Annes in me. I

sometimes think that is why I'm such a troublesome person. If I was just one Anne it would be ever so much more comfortable, but then it wouldn't be half so interesting" (Montgomery 224)- readers "enjoy watching Anne learn to successfully balance the different parts of her personality" (Robinson 212). Many other scholars, on the other hand, did not focus on the balance but emphasized one side or the other: conformed Anne that upholds a domestic norm (Elizabeth Epperly; E. Holly Pike), or a rebellious and not yet conformed feminist figure (Temma Berg; Janet Weiss-Townsend). Laura M Robinson takes a more neutral stance in identifying Anne in which she ascribes Anne as not changed but only "pruned down and branched out" (213). Margret Atwood also claims that Anne's change is not so significant and suggests that Marilla's changes outweighs that of Anne's: "Anne herself doesn't really change throughout the book. She grows taller, her hair turns from 'carrots' to 'a handsome auburn'...she talks less, though more thoughtfully, but that's about it"¹. In other words, according to Atwood, "the only character who goes through any sort of essential transformation is Marilla. Anne of Green Gables is not about Anne becoming a good little girl: it is about Marilla Cuthbert becoming a good-and more complete woman" (225). In this respect, another way of reading *Anne of Green Gables* is to consider Marilla Cuthbert as a true central character of the book. Marilla Cuthbert is as much manifold and complicated character who is worth fair amount of attention as Anne. For these reasons, this paper will explore characteristics of Marilla's motherhood because it is her motherhood journey that stimulates the transformation of Marilla's life and character. By understanding Marilla more fully, it may open up a new and diverse analyses on representations of motherhood and possibly gender issues that are represented in *Anne of Green Gables* in the future.

Anne's change from a romantic and queer red-headed girl to a more responsible women aroused controversies over whether or not she really did change inside and out. Marilla's transformation, on the other hand, is so palpable to argue otherwise.

¹ Atwood, Margaret. "Nobody ever did want me." *the guardian*, 29 Mar. 2008. Web. 5 October 2017.

This may be the reason why scholars have not examined Marilla's change as seriously as that of Anne's. Thus Marilla was categorized only as a "stern" and sensible mother (Slater 173). Such aspects of Marilla, suggested by Thomas Christina Zellar in her work of maternity and normativity in *Anne of Green Gables*, caused Anne's conformity and rather distant relationship with Anne. Irene Gammel, presents a more open interpretation of Marilla's motherhood in her study on mothering across generation in Montgomery studies. Gammel pointed out that making and having the "choice" to become a mother regardless of marriage status or age is a more evident trait of the twenty first century motherhood compared to nineteenth century but Marilla, who is a woman living in the nineteenth century, exhibits this choice to become a mother regardless of her old spinster. In other words, Marilla makes the choice to become a mother: "mothering in "Anne's world" is actually more open-ended than formerly suggested, with the novel gesturing toward twenty-first-century sensibilities and ambivalences" (Gammel 171). Taking into account previous studies' opinions about Marilla, she was considered either an agency of conformity. Simply put, Marilla was either seen as an agency of conformity symbolizing norms and rules of Avonlea, or as a unique and modern type of a mother who makes a 'choice' to become a mother regardless of her marriage status or age.

Marilla was an old spinster who lived with her brother on the outskirts of Avonlea. She never has been a mother before but by adopting Anne, she is given the role of a 'mother' and thus the new identity. Montgomery "L. M. Montgomery used motherhood as a central theme;" and explained Marilla's decision to adopt Anne allows Anne's stories to exist (Huse 60). She is not Anne's biological mother, but she did give birth to Anne's life journey by accepting Anne to a place of Green Gables. Her embodiment of this new role and identity as a mother has many interesting features. First, Marilla's mothering is rather a realistic and authentic version of motherhood that goes through mistakes and flaws which violates the high standards of a good mother in her day. This marks Marilla's difference from most

of other mothers in literature that rarely failed in depicting either a idealistic mothers or horrible mothers. Second, her motherhood served as a means of dissimilating *otherness* which is another great unique feature of Marilla's journey.

II. THE JOURNEY OF LESS THAN PERFECT BUT NOT EVIL MOTHERING

2.1 Mothers as teacher and preacher

During the economical and socially tumultuous time of 1800s, with urbanism and imposing factories, and young citizens looking for jobs to make their own living, the mothers' role was considered even greater than fathers' in parenting their children as moral citizens. Society viewed that "mothers were becoming virtually the sole arbiters of family and child life and increasingly convinced of the formative importance of early childhood" and mothers were "credited with formidable ability to shape the future character of" future citizens (Meckel 403). In *The Mother's Magazine*, published in 1833, described the need to

awaken' in mothers a deeper feeling on the subject of their responsibility, not only to their children, but to the church, and the world. The future defenders of the faith are now in the hands of mothers (qtd. Shertz 313).

This ideology emphasized the role of mother as priest and teacher. *Anne of Green Gables* period in history is assumed to be situated in late 1870s since Anne's sons fought in World War I and her youngest child was born in around 1898, eleven years apart from the eldest child, meaning we could presume Marilla would have been born around in the early 1820s. In this sense, Marilla's idea of mothering through her childhood experience would likely have resembled the points made in

The Mother's Magazine above: a teacher and a preacher who has the great responsibility and a sacred duty to bring up religious and morale citizen.

From the very beginning of Anne's bringing up, Marilla shows her determination to fulfill these roles. The very night she decides to keep Anne, she is horrified that Anne never said prayers and exclaims; "Matthew Cuthbert, it's about time somebody adopted that child and taught her something. She's next door to a perfect heathen. Will you believe that she never said a prayer in her life till tonight?"(73). Marilla was as "fond of morals as the Duchess in Wonderland," and was "firmly convinced that one should be tacked on to every remark made to a child who was being brought up" (81). She certainly rarely fails in pointing out Anne's excessive talking, imagining and romanticizing. Marilla might fight back laughter or partly agree with Anne's thoughts, but she would not fail to scold Anne about her shortcomings, such as losing her temper to Mrs. Lynde, or making overly frank comments about people like minister's long and heartless sermons and Mr. Bell's prayers.

Most of Marilla's parenting involves teaching Christian values and behaviors, household skills such as cooking and sewing, and providing protection. These were all duties asked of mothers in 19th century which Marilla is very much aware of and tries her best. However, when looking at the Marilla and Anne's relationship, it is less of a mother-daughter relationship and more of a friendship or companionship. Marilla does not exhibit the characteristic of a controlling mother that puts her child under her mighty authority. Although Marilla's choice of words is not soft and gentle, Anne regards it as an advice rather than a command.

2.2 Marilla's failure to talk sense into Anne

Marilla's efforts to civilize Anne are constant and unperturbed. However, in *Anne of Green Gables*, the actual influence of Marilla's efforts in discipline does not have a decisive power in Anne's education. Almost every comments or scolding Marilla makes are met by Anne's justification or explanation. Such conversations between

Marilla and Anne go something like the following examples:

Marilla: "You should have listened to Mr. Bell"

Anne: "But he wasn't talking to me," (112)

Marilla: "It was putting flowers on your hat at all, no matter what colour they were, that was ridiculous."

Anne: "I don't see why it's any more ridiculous to wear flowers on your hat than on your dress," (115)

Marilla: "Yes, I told you to come at two o'clock. And it's a quarter to three. I'd like to know why you didn't obey me, Anne"

Anne: "Why, I meant to, Marilla, as much as could be. But you have no idea how fascinating Idlewild is." (125)

Marilla: "Insulted fiddlesticks! You'll go to school tomorrow as usual."

Anne: "Oh no. I'm not going back, Marilla. I'll learn my lessons at home and I'll be as good as I can be and hold my tongue all the time if it's possible at all. But I will not go back to school I assure you." (162)

Marilla: "I never saw your beat for making mistakes, Anne."

Anne: "Yes, and well I know it. But have you ever noticed one encouraging thing about me, Marilla? I never make the same mistake twice." (245)

The conversations above are not to a sign of Anne's rebellion towards Marilla. Readers can see that Anne's responses are more of a guiltless innocence and not an intentional showcase of ill spirit or sourness towards Marilla's parenting. Instead, Anne's remarks are a sign that Anne takes much self-agency when it comes to changing her thoughts and ways. Anne mostly learns her lessons through her own experience and not so much through doctrines and rules she is merely *told* to keep. Anne put it into her own words by saying "I ought to grow up successfully, and I'm sure it will be my own fault if I don't" (359). Through her mistakes and errors, she realizes new things, makes amends, and matures. Anne says

ever since I came to Green Gables I've been making mistakes, and each mistake has helped to cure me of some great shortcomings. The affair of the amethyst brooch cured me of meddling with things that didn't belong to me. The Haunted Wood mistake cured me of letting my imagination run away with me. ... Dyeing my hair cured me of vanity. I never think about my hair and nose now-. (315).

In other words, Marilla's words to Anne functioned as an advice rather than an authoritative and forceful parenting voice for Anne.

2.3 Marilla's true relationship with Anne

In addition, a role of teacher and preacher as well as a warm and loving feminine mother is replaced by other characters in the book, leaving Marilla as a listener, witness, and a friend of Anne. Anne "expanded like a flower under this wholesome influence" (264) by Miss Stacey, and before Anne met Mrs. Allan, she never knew "religion was such a cheerful thing" and says "I'd like to be a Christian if I could be one like her" (237). As for the sentimental and gentle parent, Matthew takes his oar in for that role. He is always saying kind words and encouraging Anne not to give up on all her romance. Hence, the teacher, preacher, and a sentimental mother role are taken by Miss Stacey, Mrs. Allan, and Matthew. This distribution of roles alleviates the parenting role from solely being on the shoulders of a single being: a mother. Richard Meckel explains the evangelical maternal role expected of mothers in nineteenth century. Also, according to Matthew Schertz, the mothers magazines of nineteenth century shows just how much mothers were given high expectations from the society to be the perfect teacher and preacher. By giving other characters the role of taking care of and teaching Anne, Montgomery shows that a child is not a mother-only responsibility but that of a community and other family members. The very title of the book is *Anne of Green Gables* and not *Anne Shirley* or *Anne of Cuthberts*. In a sense, *Anne of Green Gables* is a journey of belonging and community. As for Marilla, she plays the role of listener and a witness of

Anne's journey. The book mostly consists of Anne and Marilla's dialogue. Anne consistently talks to Marilla about what she thought, romanced, and experienced. There are not so much instances where the book records Anne's lengthy talks except when she is talking to Marilla. Readers get to know Anne's romantic thoughts, personality, and big words that she uses through Anne's conversation with Marilla because the several-pages-long-inside a single- quotation mark-talk only occurs in those conversations with Marilla. Events that happen in the book are also compiled in a form of Anne telling what happened to Marilla. Through Anne and Marilla's dialogue, we learn about Anne's past, her first experience of Sunday school, her school life, her visit to the city, picnic, tea party, and concerts. In a way, Marilla and Anne's conversations overweigh Anne and Diana's conversations in terms of length as well as frequency placing Marilla as a listening companion.

Being the first listener and a witness of Anne's journey, Marilla becomes more and more "mellow". Through her relationship with Anne, she becomes vulnerable to love and many other emotions. Marilla, who used to be "always distrustful of sunshine, which seemed to her too dancing and irresponsible a thing for a world which was meant to be taken seriously" (6) meets the "freckled witch" (21) who became "dearer to her than anything on earth" (257). While Anne becomes a girl from a child, and a woman from a girl, Marilla also sheds her rigidity. In later chapters, she learns to display her affection. She cries often and gets lonely and accepts help more willingly. Her friendship and companionship with her daughter Anne transformed Marilla into a livelier person as if waken up from deep sleep. This did not resemble a rather hierarchical filial relationship of the 19 centuries and not a common depiction of mother and daughter relationship.

2.4 Marilla's originality in mother characters of literature

As a mother character in literature, Marilla is not like most other mothers in literature. Not being a biological mother is one thing, but her bumpy road of making

mistakes and going through trials and errors is what differentiates her from other mothers. Gilbert and Gubar claimed that images of angel and monster have been so ubiquitous throughout literature by men and have pervaded women's writing as well. If the best and the worst mothers are to be voted, many names would come up since examples of binary categorization of mothers in literature is almost effortless because majority of mothers in literature fit the angel or the witch imagery. The few mothers who are in between (neither good nor bad) are often absent or powerless like Lucretia in Percy Selley's *Cenci* (1819). A representative parable of the good and bad (sometimes murderous) mother is the disputed baby story in the Old Testament (1Kings 3:16-28). Both mothers claim the baby as their own and King Solomon recommends that the infant be cut in two. The 'good' mother begs him not to cut the infant and to give the baby to the other woman while the 'bad' mother does not protest to Solomon's idea. Also in Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (1936), Scarlett O'Hara has two good mothers: saintly biological mother and (kind of) a second mother, Mammy. There is also the gentle Marmee in Alcott's *Little Women* (1868) holds her daughters together as their circumstances are forlorn due to the absence of their father during the Civil War.

From Queen Gertrude in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the wife in *Hansel & Gretel*, Charlotte Haze in Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955), and to Mrs. Wormwood in Roald Dahl's *Matilda* (1988), lineage of 'bad' mothers in literature is considerably long and strong. On the contrary, Marilla does not fit in this binary categorization. She also cannot be categorized as absent or non-influential mother figure either. Instead, Marilla embodies the pattern of the imperfect mother who makes mistakes but a selfless and loving mother at the same time. Her trials and errors are endearing characteristic of Marilla. As Gammel describes, "perhaps it is this paradoxical combination of simultaneously flawed and idealized mothering that helps explain the high levels of reader identification with the novel" (179). Not only does Marilla overcome her prejudice towards an unwanted orphan girl, she also learns to love her like her own. Mothering for Marilla is less innate than it is learned.

2.5 Marilla's flawed motherhood

The lack of sympathy in Marilla is one of her flaws according to Montgomery who greatly valued the sympathy of a mother. In one of her journals, Montgomery lamented: "The older I grow the more I realize what a starved childhood mine was emotionally ... I was brought up by two old people, neither of whom at their best were very sympathetic and who had already grown into set, intolerant ways" (Rubio 300). This call for emotion and sympathy echoes the era's popular mothering columns. One of such columns denotes "Again it is sympathy; sympathy first, last and always sympathy" in the April 1904 *Delineator* (qtd. Gammel 173). As for an ideal mothering sentiment, these mothering columns urged mothers to show kindness and understanding toward their little ones especially toward sensitive and temperamental children. Such awareness of the need for kind and gentle ways of treating children has been around since 1800s. John S. C. Abbott in 1833 wrote that "the heart of a child is of too delicate a texture to be handled with a rough and careless grasp. Its affectionate and gentle feelings should be elicited by maternal sympathy and love" (72). Hence, Marilla's early attitudes of overdoing her cold attitudes mark her shortcomings of mothering. She often overplayed her duty with too much seriousness and less humor and sympathy. After falling in love with Anne, Marilla felt impassionate love and care for Anne (not showing them to Anne of course) and even misses Anne's queer ways and her excessive talking. In later chapters, Marilla does not judge Anne when Anne decides that she can never like Josie Pye or that she has a hard time yielding to what Mrs. Lynde says. Marilla learns to show her feelings such as loneliness, worries, and love. Transformed Marilla is not like the perfect and strong mothers like in so many literary mothers but is more of a "human" who is more authentic version of a mother who shows her weak and soft sides to her daughter but more supportive and loving.

III. Uniting with self and community: Dissimilating otherness

3.1 Green Gables within the social fabric

Marilla's emotional health gained overtime is not the only change that can be witnessed in *Anne of Green Gables*. Along with her former rigidity, her status as the other or marginalized character within the surrounding social fabric also dissimilates. *Anne of Green Gables* is built "as far away as possibly could from fellow-men...barely visible from the main road along which all the other Avonlea houses were so sociably situated", so much so that Mrs. Lynde "did not call living in such a place living at all" (4). The distance of Green Gables from the rest of Avonlea echoes Cuthberts' weak social connections within the community. Even after life-long residence in Avonlea, the Cuthbert siblings do not seem to have very intimate relationship with any of the neighbors. Marilla had "something that for lack of any other name might be called friendship" (6) with Mrs. Lynde, which does not appear to be an intimate friendship although they have known each other for so long, and is about the same age, and the nearest neighbor. Not being situated in their rightful place in the social fabric of Avonlea may be due to Marilla and Matthew's anti-social personalities or just because of somewhat unusual family structure (two old unmarried siblings together).

The very title of the book *Anne of Green Gables* suggests how important belonging is. True sense of belonging is experienced by Anne and Marilla both. Anne the orphan whom nobody ever wanted becomes *Anne of Green Gables*. Anne the heroine does not define herself by her name which is essentially personal or by her looks or deeds. She is defined by the name of the household that gave her home: "You're only Anne of Green Gables, and I see you, just as you are looking now, whenever I try to imagine I'm the Lady Cordelia. But it's a million times nicer to be Anne of Green Gables than Anne of nowhere in particular, (84)" The process of adjustment and strengthened sense of belonging is a mutual one. As Anne

becomes Anne of Green Gables, Marilla's emotion and experience of her life in Green Gables also changes and she is more situated inside community of Avonlea by adopting Anne. So much so, that Marilla can't even remember what it was like before Anne came.

3.2 Marilla's escape from her comfort zone

Marilla's pattern of gaining more social interconnectedness with family, neighbors, community, and the country takes on the form of an outward movement. She ventures out of her comfort zone mentally as well as physically. The first outward movement she takes is her choice of keeping Anne. "I don't want an orphan girl, and if I did she isn't the style I'd pick out. There's something I don't understand about her" (40), shows Marilla's first uneasiness of adopting something so alien to her. At first, Marilla "really did not know how to talk to the child, and her uncomfortable ignorance made her crisp and curt when she did not mean to" (44). Soon after, Marilla surprises herself by saying and doing things she wouldn't have done before. For instance, she would tell Mrs. Lynde that she shouldn't have twitted about Anne's looks, and the fact that she said this was a "was a surprise to herself then and ever afterwards" (91). When Anne held Marilla's hand, "its very unaccustomedness and sweetness disturbed her" (105). Sometimes, the things that Anne says are "what she herself had really thought deep down in her heart for years, but had never given expression to. It almost seemed to her that those secret, unuttered, critical thoughts had suddenly taken visible" (114). All these occurrences add up and Marilla learns to *feel* emotions and how to *show* them outwardly like when Marilla laughs so heartedly that Matthew is amazed and thinks "when had he heard Marilla laugh like that before?" (165). Also, the largest part of Marilla and Matthew's conversation is about Anne, making their conversations richer and connecting the siblings with this shared love they have for Anne.

Marilla also reaches out more and is more socially involved with people around

her. She seeks for help when she has Anne in Green Gables. She asks Mrs. Lynde for advice when Anne refuses to go to school. She borrows dress and apron patterns from Mrs. Barry so she could make Anne clothes. Marilla goes to Mrs. Barry to explain why Diana got drunk but when Mrs. Barry refuses to believe her, Marilla gets angry and judge her as an unreasonable woman, something that a good Christian Marilla would not likely say. Through Anne, she gets to know more about Avonlea School, Mrs. Allan, Miss Stacey, Aunt Josephine, and many other characters. She goes to concerts she has never gone to for more than twenty years to see Anne. Her thoughts also travel to the past, like when her aunt said "What a pity she is such a dark homely little thing" (94) and her romance with Gilbert's father, John Blythe, and later when Anne grows up, she thinks about Anne when she first came to Avonlea. Her mind travels to the future too, like how she will feel when Anne grows up and leave them. All of the above shows Marilla stepping out of the comfort zone and into "dubious paths of the abstract" (115) and her new sense of belonging.

When Marilla took Anne of nowhere particular, the orphan girl who barely went to school or said her prayers, and raised her as Anne who got into and graduated Queens College with the highest grade and became a teacher who would educate future citizens, Marilla has served the community and the nation. It is worth noting that this was not achieved through heterosexual marriage and giving birth to a biological child. Giving birth to children and raising them in religious and moral citizens were a sacred duty of women in 19th century. However, Marilla did not get married, and did not give a birth to a child. Still she managed to be a mother of a child and served the nation in her own way (adoption), at her own time (she was about sixty). Overall, she widened her sense of womanhood and citizenship through Anne.

IV. Further discussions and conclusion

Montgomery seems to have idealistic ideas about maternity. As Robert Seelinger Trites emphasizes in her work on feminist voices in children's novels, maternity can be "liberating rather than restricting, creative rather than destructive" (159) and this is the type of maternity Montgomery grants to Marilla. Marilla's undeveloped secret softness bloomed along with Anne's journey. She was a fallible human who is neither perfect nor evil, and had a lot to learn about how to treat children. She was strict and hid her emotions and displayed sarcastic responses rather than sympathizing. This hindrance of emotions was not only due to Marilla's personality but had something to do with her religious beliefs as well:

The lesson of a love that should display itself easily in spoken word and open look was one Marilla could never learn. But she had learned to love this slim, grey-eyed girl with affection all the deeper and stronger from its very undemonstrativeness. Her love made her afraid of being unduly indulgent indeed. She had an uneasy feeling that it was rather sinful to set one's heart so intensely on any human creature as she had set hers on Anne, and perhaps she performed a sort of unconscious penance for this by being stricter and more critical than if the girl had been less dear to her. (331)

Through the help of the narrator, Marilla's love (and the reasons that stop her from expressing them) is showcased to the reader throughout the book in abundance. The narrator showcases the moment when Marilla realizes her love for Anne, how proud she feels about Anne's achievements, how she dreads to let Anne go to Queens, and to Marilla's cries of loneliness. Such descriptions on emotions and thoughts of a character are heavily centered on Marilla compared to any other characters in the book. There are many other characters in the book but the narrator does not narrate their thoughts or emotions as much as Marilla's. The reason for such generous explanation may not be to help Marilla's lack of expressive power but because Marilla's metamorphoses through raising Anne can be seen as one of the central

themes of the book.

Marilla's crisp utterances and cutting off Anne's talk is not given much power in the book which weakens accusations and blames Marilla receives as a major conforming power. Strict and sarcastic comments don't seem to cause influential change or conformity of Anne. Powerlessness of her utterances is what neutralizes Marilla's somewhat harsh words that do not reflect her true emotions. Anne is mostly self-directed and takes agency in her own transformation on her own terms and not what Marilla tells her to do or not to do. This is congruent with Montgomery's child-friendly attitude towards motherhood. The society imposed responsibility of the household duties as well as teacher and preacher. This great responsibility of being the carrier of morality and religious doctrines could be a destructive if done without sensibility and sympathy. Better understanding of the importance of childhood experiences and the need of sympathy in mothering are emphasized in *Anne of Green Gables* through rigid, sensible, and unsympathetic Marilla becoming a loving, emotional, and sympathetic person.

The role of Marilla is ironically, the role of a listener and a friend of Anne's from the beginning although she doesn't like listening to Anne's endless talks at first. She is the witness of Anne's thoughts and imaginations throughout the book. This position as a listener and a friend guides Marilla to be better situated inside the social fabric of Avonlea. First, she ventures out of her comfort zone from the start; emotionally, if not physically. As a spinster who is not married or without biological offspring (while her only kind-of-a friend Mrs. Lynde had about ten children), and living in a very anti-socially built Green Gables alone with her quiet brother, she had a quiet and undisturbed life until Anne came along. The house was not the same place ever since Anne came to live with them. As her heart widened up gradually towards Anne, simultaneously, she was becoming more aware of her own feelings and gained a new identity as a mother and a citizen who successfully raised an orphan.

Canadian writer Margret Atwood concluded that Marilla's development is the

central one in the novel. One of many signs of change is Marilla's laughter and tears in later chapters which are great surprise to her own brother Matthew who lived with her his whole life. However, if we weigh the amount of attention Anne's transformation received, Marilla's transformation was not examined to its potential. The majority of scholars' view on Marilla could be narrowed down into two: seeing her as rigid spinster who gradually softened up and as an influential character that caused Anne to be pruned down. This paper discusses a deeper understanding of Marilla's unique motherhood and a further comprehension of her change, not only her emotional health, but a healthier sense of belonging. Marilla is a mother by choice who is more of a friend going through mistakes and learning and growing with her child. Motherhood for Marilla is a transformation towards growth in emotional capacity as well as a sense of social belonging. To wrap up, the unique mother and daughter relationship, how she is different from the rest of conventional mother figure norms of her time, and how Anne's progress of belonging is a mutual one with Marilla, are some of the issues that this paper covers. This will hopefully lead to a deeper understanding of Marilla, her motherhood, and her transformation in *Anne of Green Gables*.

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