Reading the language of attire:

Clothing and Identity in

Frances Hodgson Burnett, Edith Nesbit and Beatrix Potter

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis explores how a selection of British children's stories written by three female authors between 1880 and 1915 reflected and contributed through verbal and pictorial sartorial images to the construction of a new version of identity: one that is not determined by birth and thus cannot be contained by established mechanisms of control. Scholarship in queer theory has already drawn attention to how dress is employed in literature and popular culture to construct identity, but this thesis draws attention to the centrality of dress images in the gradual construction of more liberated versions of not only gender, but also national and class identity. By providing three substantial case studies involving rigorous close reading of the language of dress, this study also lays the foundations for future research.

This thesis consists of an introduction, five chapters and a conclusion. Using Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Tom Kitten* (1907), the Introduction argues that reading the language of attire permits a more nuanced understanding of how a story participates in the discursive construction of identities through a discussion of images of dress, undress and cross-dressing. Chapter Two examines images of dress in the popular press, to illustrate how clothing was closely involved in socio-political discourses and how it both expressed and influenced contemporary (often contesting) constructions of identity. Chapter Three explores how in some nineteenth-century children's texts the bodies of animals were implicated in socio-political discourses. Close reading reveals a shift over the course of the century, from clothed animals largely being used to confirm existing social structures to their use to challenge and even transgress existing social boundaries. The chapter explores the implications of this change on constructions of identity that emerge as more negotiable.

The next three chapters are based on reading the language of clothing in selected stories by, respectively, Burnett, Nesbit and Potter, focusing on the relationship between clothing and identity. Finally, the Conclusion offers a sartorial reading of a select list of texts belonging to other genres, written in other countries and at other times, to suggest the possibilities of future research in this area.

Key texts discussed are Burnett's *A Little Princess, Being the Whole Story of Sara Crewe Now Told for the First Time* (1905), *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886) and *The*

Secret Garden (1911) as well as the lesser-known *The Lost Prince* (1915). My discussion of Nesbit involves the three stories about the Bastable children in *The Story of the Treasure Seekers* (1899), *The Wouldbegoods* (1901) and *The New Treasure Seekers* (1904). In Potter's case, I examine the well-known Peter Rabbit stories as well as a range of others, such as *The Tale of the Two Bad Mice* (1904), *The Tale of Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle* (1905), *The Tale of Mr. Jeremy Fisher* (1906), *The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck* (1908), *The Tale of Samuel Whiskers* (1908), *The Tale of Ginger and Pickles* (1909), *The Tale of Mrs. Tittlemouse* (1910), *The Tale of Timmy Tiptoes* (1911), *The Tale of the Pie and the Patty-Pan* (1911) and *The Tale of Pigling Bland* (1913).

To

my parents, who always believed in me,

Vangelis, who always encouraged me

and

NiauNiau, who was always with me, almost until the very end

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Know, first, who you are; and then adorn yourself accordingly.[1]

Sartorial traditions and transgressions

If we look at Figure 1.1, we will surely say that feline Mrs. Tabitha Twitchit in Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Tom Kitten* (1907) never heard of Epictetus' (55 AD-135 AD) advice. In expectation of guests, she ignores her children's kittenish nature, and having 'dressed Moppet and Mittens in clean pinafores and tuckers' and taken 'all sorts of elegant uncomfortable clothes out of a chest of drawers' for Tom, tells her kittens to 'keep your frocks clean, children! You must walk on your hind legs!'[2]

Mrs. Twitchit's strict dress expectations, along with Potter's anthropomorphising illustrations, provide the lovely basis for a story to which most children will be able to relate – for most children have at some point been obliged to dress in uncomfortable clothes, with their parents appearing similarly ignorant of Epictetus' advice. Thus, children can empathise with Moppet and Mittens, who can walk only 'unsteadily', slip, and get 'several green smears' on their attire, and with Tom, who is 'unable to jump when walking on his hind legs in trousers' and sheds 'buttons right and left'.[3] They can probably also imagine the kittens' exhilaration when their clothes gradually come off and, ultimately, are stolen by the Puddle-Ducks. And when furious Mrs. Twitchit sends the kittens to their room as punishment, telling her guests they have the measles, it is almost certain that child readers will celebrate that the genteel tea party from which they are excluded is disturbed by the kittens romping around above and donning their mother's clothes. That the Puddle-Ducks have lost the stolen clothes in the pond and 'have been looking for them ever since' will surely also bring a smile to any young reader's face, since it must seem like 'divine punishment' for getting the kittens into trouble.[4]

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[1] *The Works of Epictetus, Consisting of his Discourses, in Four Books: Preserved by Arrian, the Enchiridion, and Fragments*, trans. Elizabeth Carter, 4th edn., 2 vols. (London: F.C. Rivington, 1807), vol. 1, p. 7.

[2] Beatrix Potter, *The Tale of Tom Kitten*, in *Further Tales from Beatrix Potter* (1907; Middlesex: F. Warne & Co., 1987), pp. 5-31 (pp. 11-13). Hereafter referred to in text, illustrations and footnotes as *Tom Kitten* and *Further Tales*, respectively.

[3] Potter, *Tom Kitten*, pp. 14-16.

[4] Potter, *Tom Kitten*, p. 31.

Clothes in *Tom Kitten*, however, do more than add to plot and engage readers' sympathies. Careful exploration of verbal and pictorial dress in Potter's stories exposes what other critics have not recognised: that when Potter's characters don or doff dress, struggle to retain it, are stripped or play around with it, these clothes add significant complexity to Potter's seemingly innocent stories. It is true, critics have already identified the subversiveness in Potter's stories; Alison Lurie points out that 'the unconventional message is concealed behind a screen of conventional morality', and Daphne Kutzer stresses that 'Potter is on the side of rebellion . . . but her allegiance is a complicated one'.[5] It is also true that scholars have engaged with Potter's sartorial images in their exploration of social commentary in Potter's stories, but they have paid only little attention to the centrality of dress in the discursive contribution to the construction of class, gender and national identity at the *fin-de-siècle*. Approaching this dress engagement through the prism of Michel Foucault's theory of the body as a site of regulation, as well as Anthony Giddens' analysis of self-identity, in fact, indicates that clothes permit Potter to question as well as confirm hierarchies and boundaries. And my reading reveals that her texts suggest that self-identity is too complex to be contained through conventional categorisation.

Let us return to *Tom Kitten*, which has been discussed extensively as a tale that criticises contemporary dictates of proper child-rearing practices and child-behaviour, thus indirectly reflecting Potter's own, stifling, childhood experiences.[6] Indeed, Potter's parents were controlling, resisting Potter's desire for romantic relationships and financial independence through her artwork even after she had turned thirty. In her diary, written in code, Potter repeatedly complained about her mother and even as an adult admitted her father was 'being as usual deplorable' and making her cry.[7]

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[5] Alison Lurie, *Don't Tell the Grown-Ups: The Subversive Power of Children's Literature* (Boston: Back Bay Books, 1990), p. 95. Henceforward referred to in footnotes as *Don't Tell the Grown-Ups*; Daphne Kutzer, *Beatrix Potter: Writing in Code* (New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 105. Henceforward referred to as *Beatrix Potter* in footnotes.

[6] Leslie Linder, *The Journal of Beatrix Potter: 1881-1897*, rev. edn. (1966; London: Warne, 1989). Henceforward referred to as *Journal* in footnotes.

[7] Potter, '1895 London, Sunday November 3rd', in Linder, *Journal*, p. 398.

Figure 1.1: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Tom Kitten* (1907), p. 14

However, exploration of the interplay of discursive and pictorial attire in *Tom Kitten* suggests more complex commentary: an engagement not only with Victorian nursery culture, with the associated isolation as well as subjugation that especially children of the upper and middle class experienced, but with Victorian culture and identity. Through dress images, the suggestion is made that this culture of propriety, with its denial of natural tendencies through insistence on rules and boundaries, is doomed to lead to catastrophic consequences as it ignores that identity cannot be imposed and regulated.

So, back to the story, where attention to the kittens' natural state is sartorially drawn early on, with the kittens being introduced as having 'dear little fur coats of their own' and innocently 'tumbl[ing]' and playing 'in the dust'.[8] The illustration visualises this sense of freedom, depicting three kittens, in their natural state, seemingly genderless, framed by beautiful flowers that bring to mind images of purifying nature (Figure 1.2). The prompt arrival of anthropomorphised and dressed Mrs. Twitchit onto the scene, however, disrupts this impression of the natural and free, replacing it with the image of a traditionally-attired matron and confining domestic space, when she 'fetched the kittens indoors, to wash and dress them, before the fine company arrived'.[9] Maybe this is not exactly the parental figure that in Samuel Butler's *Way of All Flesh*, published a few years before (written 1872-1884, published 1903), exerts harsh Victorian rule over the family by forcing children, through strict rules and painful punishment, into submission. Yet, there are parallels to be found. The illustration depicting Mrs. Twitchit as leading the kittens inside and up the stairs cannot but bring to mind Victorian nursery culture, with the kittens depicted as turning their backs on nature and natural instincts to conform to demands that require the donning of gender-appropriate attire (Figure 1.3).[10]

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[8] Potter, *Tom Kitten*, p. 6.

[9] Potter, *Tom Kitten*, p. 6.

[10] For more analysis of Victorian child-rearing practices and the so-called nursery culture, see: Alice Miller, *The Drama of the Gifted Child*, trans. Ruth Ward (New York: BasicBooks, 1981); Alice Miller, *For Your Own Good: Hidden Cruelty in Child-Rearing and the Roots of Violence*, 3rd edn. (New York: Noonday Press, 1990); Claudia Nelson, 'Growing Up: Childhood', in Herbert F. Tucker, ed., *A Companion to Victorian Literature and Culture* (Malden: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 69-81. Henceforward referred to as 'Growing Up' and *Companion* in footnotes.

Figure 1.2: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Tom Kitten* (1907), p. 6

Figure 1.3: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Tom Kitten* (1907), p. 7

It is from this moment on that sartorial images give this seemingly innocent story a disturbing subplot. For within domestic space, the kittens are gradually anthropomorphised and endowed with a normative heterosexual gender identity. However, this process means the kittens undergo painful experiences and suffocating emotions to first be purified of their feline nature. Faces are scrubbed pitilessly, and the bowl of water and the sponge visualise a disregard of cat practices of licking and dislike of water (Figure 1.4).

Tom's sartorial experiences, particularly, express resistance to the enforcement of gender identity, with dress images bringing to mind a sort of inverted rape, where clothes are not violently removed but forcibly put on. The image of Mrs. Twitchit using pin and thread to cover up Tom's exposed kitten-breast with synthetic buttons, while he stands as if turned to stone, with eyes almost popping out, enforces the sense of unnatural and agonizing oppression (Figure 1.5). Resistance proves futile, for Tom may scratch her and 'several buttons [may] burst off' because he 'was very fat and he had grown', but Mrs. Twitchit seems intent on disregarding the child- and kitten-spirit and 'sewed them on again', allowing her children to escape the confinement of the house only once they succumb to enforced socialisation and walk on their 'hind legs'.[11]

What is so exciting in this story is that dress depiction in the following illustrations not only enhances the impression of enforced propriety and boundaries, but suggests a much spicier subtext. The female kittens are forced to don gender-coded attire that makes them resemble little ladies. They wear pinafores that are reminiscent of long dresses, with their white paws suggesting gloves, while Tom has turned into a little boy with his blue trousers and jacket with a frill collar (Figure 1.6). However, this gendering seems to confuse them: the female kittens and Tom look perplexed at each other and their clothes. They have raised their arms as if uncertain of what to do with them now that their front legs have been metamorphosed and are no longer touching the ground.

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[11] Potter, *Tom Kitten*, pp. 10-12.

Figure 1.4: Illustration by
Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix
Potter's *Tom Kitten* (1907), p. 8

Figure 1.5: Illustration by
Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix Potter's
Tom Kitten (1907), p. 12

Figure 1.6: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in
Beatrix Potter's *Tom Kitten* (1907), p. 13

Let us take a closer look at Tom's gendering by considering that Tom's sartorial metamorphosis is reminiscent of Thomas Gainsborough's painting *Blue Boy* (1770),but also that this painting inspired the so-called 'Fauntleroy-look' (Figure 1.7), popularised by Frances Hodgson Burnett's novel *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886).[12] Tom's depiction in light of the Fauntleroy-look suggests there might be more to Tom's blue attire than one might assume: the suggestion that the attempt to dress children into a supposedly genteel masculinity that bordered on androgyny might be mistaken. Otherwise, why choose a look that by then had gone out of fashion and that had triggered, as will be discussed in Chapter Four in detail, even shortly after its publication, biting commentary, when it was accused of being overly romanticised and effeminate?[13]

We need to consider here that Victorian concepts of a child's innocence and potential perceptions of its non-sexuality had been severely shaken at the turn of the century, particularly with Sigmund Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* were published in 1905. [14] In fact, the idea that sexuality set in only during puberty had already been rejected 25 years before – at a time when Freud still vehemently denied the idea of an innate sexual drive in children and when the general agreement was that 'sexual activities in childhood were indicative of a congenital predisposition to perversion'. [15] Gradually though, authors ceased to pathologise sexual feelings or behaviours during infancy and childhood, and posited early childhood as being the time when sexual identity was shaped. For instance, there was Samuel Lindner's paper on thumb-sucking that could induce lustful feelings (which he called Wonnesaugen) in 1879 or Wilhelm Stekel's article 'On Coitus in Childhood' (1895) which argued that children experience sexual emotions (what he called Wollustgefühle) and masturbate at a young age; there was also sexologist Albert Moll's discussion of young boys' mutual masturbation at a boys' boarding school in *Die Conträre Sexualempfindung* (1891) and his monograph *Libido Sexualis* (1898) on this *conträre sexualempfindung*, the contemporary term for homosexuality, which was influenced by and extended Max

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[12] Frances Hodgson Burnett, *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886; London: Penguin Books, 1995). Hereafter referred to in text, illustrations and footnotes as *Fauntleroy*; Thomas Gainsborough, *Blue Boy* (1770), *The Huntington*. <http://www.huntington.org/WebAssets/Templates/artdetail.aspx?id=14392&terms=Blue%20Boy> [accessed 16.3.2014].
[13] Beverly Lyon Clark, *Kiddie Lit: The Cultural Construction of Children's Literature in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), pp. 21-25.Hereafter referred to in text, illustrations and footnotes as *Kiddie Lit*.
[14] Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, trans. James Stratchy (1905; USA: International Alliance Pro-Publishing, 2010); for more on Freud, also see Peter Coveney, *The Image of Childhood* (1957; Baltimore: Penguin, 1967), pp. 291-303 (p. 296).
[15] Lutz D. H. Sauerteig, 'Loss of Innocence: Albert Moll, Sigmund Freud and the Invention of Childhood Sexuality around 1900', *Medical History*, 56.2 (April 2012), 156-183 (p. 163).

Dessoir's 1891-discussion of sexual sentiments during puberty; there were also Havelock Ellis' 'Auto-Eroticism: A Psychological Study' (1898) on masturbation during infancy and childhood (even by an eight-month old girl) and Magnus Hirschfeld's discussion of homosexuality in 1896.[16] By 1905, Freud had also conceded that sexual urges existed already at infantile age and that children needed to go through stages of sexual development to avoid fixation or neuroses. Overall, such works gave rise to burgeoning research on the importance of a child's sexual development and parental involvement in the child's upbringing. It is, of course, unclear what age Tom is supposed to be, but might Potter be drawing here some kind of parallel to Freud's theory of castration-anxiety during the phallic stage, when a child is aged between three and six? Tom at the beginning of this story lacks sexuality, resembling his sisters – a point inferred from the illustration in Figure 1.4, where his visible belly gives no indication of his sex. Considering his enforced sartorial resemblance to Gainsborough's *Blue Boy*, one can well say that Tom has undergone symbolic castration in his mother's attempts to claim gentility and the femininity of the nineteenth-century elite, by sartorially regulating her son's body.

However, careful consideration of the verbal and pictorial undress and cross-dress images reveals biting critique of a repressive culture and a celebration of a more natural state where boundaries cannot be enforced. For once the kittens escape their mother's control and oppressive wooden walls and ceilings, to return to a natural space of lush greenery, Victorian tenets of propriety lose their power. The female kittens prove unable to keep their clothes on and Tom's jacket, though so carefully buttoned up, bursts open again, revealing the animal body. This allows the kittens to return to their feline, pre-normative gendering stage. Tom's depiction, with the exposed chest and the relieved smile, framed by green bushes and pink flowers, no longer evokes Gainsborough's stylish, composed and androgynous *Blue Boy* (Figure 1.8).

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[16] Information from Sauerteig, 'Loss of Innocence: Albert Moll, Sigmund Freud and the Invention of Childhood Sexuality around 1900', 156-183; Volkmar Sigush, 'The Sexologist Albert Moll – between Sigmund Freud and Magnus Hirschfeld', *Medical History*, 56.2 (April 2012), 184-200.

Figure 1.7: Painting by Thomas Gainsborough, *Blue Boy* (1770), held in the Huntington Collection, San Marino, California

Furthermore, a sartorial reading reveals that gender commentary does not end here, exposing a fascinating subtext in the following illustrations. Mrs. Twitchit's artificial, even falsely assumed propriety that results in an unnatural gendering is exposed when the kittens, sent in punishment to their room, produce so much noise by wreaking such havoc on the symbol of their repression, the clothes, that they 'disturbed the dignity and repose of the tea party'.[17] When Mrs. Twitchit is pictorially depicted as walking into the room and finding the items of clothing scattered on the floor and the bed, two kittens hiding behind the bed and probably undressed, and one wearing nothing but a woman's bonnet, it becomes clear that social and parental rules and expectations cannot control natural impulses (Figure 1.9).Given Tom's centrality in the story to this point, we might assume the kitten in the foreground is Tom. The bonnet may belong to his mother, since judging from the length of the robe hanging from the door, and perhaps the fine bed, this is Mrs. Twitchit's room. The fact that Tom has turned his back to the reader is interesting, as it suggests that by doffing the gendering boy-clothes and donning the bonnet, Tom has transformed, becoming indistinguishable from his sisters and temporarily losing or masking his masculine identity. And it is in this instance that an interrogation through references to theories of cross-dressing can render valuable insight. Obviously, claiming that this illustration endorses gender-transgression or promotes the idea of gender fluidity would be extreme. First, since Tom is depicted as donning only the bonnet and not one of his mother's dresses, this cannot be considered a fully developed instance of cross-dressing. Second, since Tom is just a boy-kitten, he will be wearing the bonnet only temporarily; thus, this illustration can also not be considered a suggestion that masculine identity can be lost or discarded.

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[17] Potter, *Tom Kitten*, pp. 28-29.

Figure 1.8: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Tom Kitten* (1907), p. 16

Figure 1.9: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Tom Kitten* (1907), p. 28

Yet this illustration complicates meaning, opening up more complex and controversial issues – especially if approached through Queer theory. Very interesting insights can in fact be gained by reading her stories through the lens of Mary Zaborskis' and Kathryn Bon Stockton's understanding of orphanhood as imagining and allowing space for the fictional child to be queer. Zaborskis, employing Stockton's versions of the gay child, claims that 'children's literature featuring orphaned (or essentially orphaned) girls is a genre that both imagines and allows spaces for fictional children to be queer in the time of childhood'.[18] According to Stockton, all children are queer, since they 'are not permitted (or admitted) to being sexual beings' and thus to becoming straight.[19] Zaborskis, however perceives queerness as 'manifest[ing] among children in multiple forms' and as 'elicit[ing] distinct responses from adults'; as she points out, orphaned girls are queer because 'they have a gap during childhood when corrected gendered behaviour and embodiment is not cultivated by a parent' as well as because, when 'adults become anxious about it', a 'prematurely sexual nature' is projected upon them.[20] What if we apply Zaborskis theory to boys? Within this framework, paternal absence can be associated with opening up a space within which masculinity loses its masculine associations and gender becomes more ephemeral. With Tom's father being absent, Tom lacks the role model to facilitate his gender formation on his way to what Zaborskis calls 'normative adulthood'.[21] Might Potter's depiction of the mother's enforced gendering which, however, borders on androgenisation or even symbolic castration, be considered to have triggered a temporary suspension of gender? Tom as a young kitten is still in the process of being normatively gendered into his so-called 'proper' gender. Since the previous loss of his attire already implied temporary suspension of his gendered (and possibly androgynous or castrating) masculinity, Tom is again free of a gender identity imposed by his mother and finds himself occupying a space that comes before the acceptance of a so-called proper heterosexual masculinity.

Very interesting is that the story remains silent on the consequences of these sartorial escapades. For while Tom's doffing of the bonnet takes place within domestic space and moreover within the privacy of the bedroom, not seen by the mother's guests,

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[18] Mary Zaborskis, 'Orphaning Queerness', *Critical Theory and Social Justice/Journal of Undergraduate Research/Occidental College*, 3.1 (Spring 2013), pp. 1-25 (p.1), referring to Kathryn Bond Stockton, 'Growing Sideways, or Versions of the Queer Child: The Ghost, the Homosexual, the Freudian, the Innocent, and the Interval of Animal,' in Steven Bruhm and Natasha Hurley, eds., *Curiouser: On the Queerness of Children*(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), pp. 277-315. Henceforward referred to as 'Growing Sideways' in footnotes.
[19] In Zaborskis, 'Orphaning Queerness', p. 7.
[20] Zaborskis, 'Orphaning Queerness', p. 8.
[21] Zaborskis, 'Orphaning Queerness', p. 5.

it is witnessed – as, quite interestingly, only the illustration tells us - by his mother (Figure 1.9). On the one hand, one might argue that dress images are employed to discourage transgression. For while the reader does not know what happens afterward, the depiction of the pile of clothes on the floor and the appearance of the mother in the illustration plays upon the reader's expectations of subsequent scolding and punishment – and brings to mid Zaborskis' argument of parental anxiety. On the other, why not take into account the absence of a verbal narration of the consequences? After all, what the reader is left with is the image of Mrs. Twitchit witnessing Tom wearing a bonnet, while the following illustration depicts Tom's jacket and hat floating in the water, picked at by the fowls. The reader, in other words, does not see Tom as being metaphorically reformed into a normative heterosexuality through punishment. However one chooses to read Tom's donning of the bonnet, what this brief discussion has hopefully shown is that reading images of dress, undressing and re-dressing can be used in complicated ways to 'queer' received ideas about the ways in which identity is constructed, and to expose the spuriousness of Mrs. Twitchit's emphatic ideas about proper behaviour.

Tom Kitten is one of the many stories that feature children involved in acts of dressing, undressing and undressing. The foundation of my thesis is that authorial acts of dressing, undressing and cross-dressing constitute a major, but neglected, theme in children's literature. This neglect is surprising in view of the ever-growing scholarship on how sartorial images in literature engage in the formulation of identities. All texts provide social commentary and add to the shaping of any society's identity, by commenting more freely, often unconsciously, on ideologies and hidden facets of society. Texts featuring child protagonists offer even more complex commentary, since the child's body, in comparison to the adult body, with its associations of innocence and resistance, sexuality and transformation, can allow the author even more opportunities metaphorically to strip naked traditional constructions of British class, gender and national identity. An analysis of the dress and undress with which authors and illustrators have endowed their characters thus permits deeper understanding of underlying meanings and agendas, of tensions and contradictions within a text.

The focus of this study is selected texts by Edith Nesbit, Frances Hodgson Burnett and Beatrix Potter, involving either a child or surrogate child; that is to say, an animal. The central assumption is that the theme of dress, and possibly even more importantly undress and cross-dressing, is central and complex, especially compared to children's fiction of the early and mid-Victorian period, as in these stories, we find an increasingly

multifaceted and contradictory engagement with contemporary perceptions of gender, class and nation. However, the works discussed should not be considered as necessarily representative of a larger corpus since I only marginally interrogate sartorial images in other, select works of the period and thus do not fully analyse whether dress is used in a similar fashion by male authors or by female authors who exhibited a different lifestyle or by less prominent (female or male) authors. My question is whether gender, class and national identity in the selected texts are constructed and deconstructed through sartorial traditions and transgressions, whether characters employ dress with agency to construct themselves, and whether the stories in any way reflect what Butler terms performativity in their portrayal of dress and the dressed body.

By first exploring dress images in stories written prior to 1880, featuring both animal and child characters, and then dress images in selected texts by Nesbit, Burnett and Potter, alongside a consideration of contemporary socio-political debates, I argue that even if the authors do not express common critique and their positions are ridden with contradictions, the texts transgress established boundaries and authorise the possibility of plasticity and transmutation of identity. I do not claim that these stories insist on the primacy of a completely transgressive identity. Rather, I assert that these stories, compared to their predecessors, increasingly play with the possibility of more dynamic, flexible and nuanced versions of identity that can no longer be contained by established structures, and are instead written into existence through personal behaviours and practices. This study will, therefore, generate a fresh perspective of the centrality of discursive dress in the construction of more hybrid British class, gender and national identities at the turn of the century, and also point to possible future directions for research, revealing the value of exploring dress images in other stories of the period to determine whether the selected texts can be considered as representative of other works of this period, as well as dress images in stories of later periods to determine whether dress images remain central or even increase their centrality.

Literature review: Functions and meaning of dress

Before the late twentieth century, the majority of scholarship on the meaning of dress was limited to approaching it as a material object of consumption. This involved examining dress as an item to be worn, criticising it for its ugliness and immorality or praising its morality and beauty, or cataloguing it in the process of creating a costume

history – and almost utterly disregarding the significance of clothes in the construction of who we are within our society. Even psychoanalyst John Carl Flügel added little psychological depth to scholarly engagement with attire in *The Psychology of Clothes* (1930). Though he acknowledged that '[c]lothes […] have entered into the very core of our existence', he mostly ignored the symbolic meaning of dress by defining its fundamental purposes to be protection, modesty and decoration, with the latter concerning visualisation of occupation, nationality, display of wealth.[22] Today, dress is acknowledged as a form of language that communicates a variety of messages to others and has been recognised for its centrality to identity. As Christopher Breward puts it, 'fashion has played a defining but largely uncredited role in the formulation of [gender, social, religious, professional and age] differences'.[23] Roland Barthes made the comparison of fashion to language in 1960s in *The Fashion System* (1967), but it was Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) which had laid the groundwork for this paradigm change, when the author argued that:

> One is not born, but rather becomes a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization that produces this creature.[24]

De Beauvoir certainly drew attention to the construction of gender, and the importance of the body within culture, and increased feminist scholarship has focused on the appearance of the body, perceiving fashion as language employed in the formulation of gender and sex, and examining how bodily representations are 'situated bodily practices'.[25] As Joanne Entwistle argues 'human bodies are dressed bodies'.[26] In the 1980s, Alison Lurie also used the analogy of language to examine how clothing is used to communicate in *The Language of Clothes* (1983), albeit in a less academic fashion than Barthes. And Elizabeth Wilson's *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (1985) expanded further on the concept of dress as language, claiming that dress images communicate 'more subtly than most objects and commodities, precisely

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[22] John Carl Flügel, *The Psychology of Clothes* (1930; London: The Hogarth Press, 1950), pp. 25-38; 19. Henceforward referred to as *Psychology* in footnotes.
[23] Christopher Breward, *The Culture of Fashion* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994). Henceforward referred to as *Culture* in footnotes.
[24] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (London: Vintage Classics, 1997), p. 295.
[25] Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000). Henceforward referred to as *Fashioned Body* in footnotes.
[26] Joanne Entwistle, 'The Dressed Body', in Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth B. Wilson, eds., *Body Dressing* (New York: Berg, 2001), pp. 33-58. Henceforward referred to as 'Dressed Body' in footnotes.

because of that intimate relationship to our bodies and ourselves, so that we speak (however loosely) of both a "language" and a "psychology" of dress'.[27] Since the 1990s, there has been an outpouring of academic publications exploring the relationship between dress and fashion. However, a lack of systematic scholarship is still evident when it comes to how dress images are employed in authorial engagement with identity in children's literature. Examples of pioneering studies that examine the centrality of dress images in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century children's literature are Victoria Flanagan's discussions of cross-dressing in Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) in 'Reframing Masculinity: The Destabilizing Effect of the Female Cross- Dress', and Marjorie Garber's discussion of Peter Pan in *Vested Interests: Cross Dressing & Cultural Anxiety* (1992).[28] However, both only engage with cross-dressing and masculine identity, and thus neglect other, equally interesting facets of identity.

Let us now discuss existing scholarship on dress in stories by the selected authors. I will begin with Potter since her story introduced this thesis. Potter's use of dress images has been discussed reasonably extensively, albeit in contradictory ways. Furthermore, most scholarship that examines dress focuses on the Peter Rabbit stories and thus ignores sartorial images in the totality of Potter's universe. Even less of this scholarship explores how dress is engaged with the formulation of identity. For some critics, as Margaret Joan Blount, attire functions mostly as an anthropomorphising tool, employed to make the animal characters more approachable to the child reader, and little attention is paid to any deeper significance of dress employed in the formulation of identity.[29] There are scholars who read Potter's texts within a psychosocial context, but again, attire is seen mostly as an anthropomorphising tool. For instance, Katie Mullins argues that Peter functions as a hero who shows the reader the path towards self-development by illustrating both possibilities and limitations, but her discussion of dress images remains limited.[30] Some critics do recognise the significance of dress in Potter's stories, as with Carole Scott who, in two articles, perceives clothes as signifiers of social

[27] Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity* (1985; Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2003), p. vii. Henceforward referred to as *Adorned in Dreams* in footnotes.

[28] Victoria Flanagan, 'Reframing Masculinity: Female-to-Male Cross Dressing', in John Stephens, ed., *Ways of Being Male* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 33-58; Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross Dressing & Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 1992). Henceforward referred to as 'Reframing Masculinity' and *Vested Interests*, respectively, in footnotes.

[29] Margaret Joan Blount, 'Dressed Animals and Others', in *Animal Land. The Creatures of Children's Fiction* (London: Hutchinson, 1974), pp. 131-51. Henceforward referred to as 'Dressed Animals' in footnotes; Tess Cosslett, *Talking Animals in British Children's Fiction, 1786-1914* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 153. Henceforward referred to as *Talking Animals* in footnotes.

[30] Katie Mullins, 'Crossing Boundaries and Forming Identity in Beatrix Potter's The Tale of Peter Rabbit and The Tale of Benjamin Bunny', *The Looking Glass: New Perspectives on Children's Literature*, 13.1 (2009), pp. 1-10. <http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/ojs/index.php/tlg/article/viewFile/137/136> [accessed 2.4.2009]. Henceforward referred to as 'Crossing Boundaries' in footnotes.

expectations and constraints.[31] Such an approach is valuable, but it implies disregarding Potter's incongruous use of attire images, with animals sometimes shedding and sometimes retaining their clothes while struggling for liberty. One critic who draws attention to this inconsistency is Tess Cosslett, but she offers a generalised reading of attire, and blurs the human/animal divide, without taking into account the tension existing between stories and between story and illustration, or the relationship of dress to identity.[32] Charles Butler's deconstructive reading of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902) as a near encounter with cannibalism is very interesting, but unfortunately, his argument that the loss of Peter's clothes results in perpetual uncertainty of whether Peter returns to his natural state or is posited as a 'naked' child opens up more questions than it provides answers.[33] The most interesting exploration is possibly Jopi Nyman's post-colonial reading of the Rabbit-stories as colonial fantasy, exploring the stories' engagement with identity. According to Nyman, Peter's loss of clothes equals the losing the signifiers of his constructed Edwardian masculine identity and turns him into an 'emasculated character unable to control his emotions'.[34] One critic who shifts away from the Rabbit stories and explores attire use in the author's engagement with social issues is Hannah Field, part of whose argument is that attire is used to stress the labour involved by unseen, unwanted and oppressed social groups; unfortunately, however, her reading is too story-specific to offer insight into other stories.[35]

Turning to Burnett, one area that has received a lot of attention is her exploration of national, social and gender identity – but when it comes to dress, attention is paid mostly to its contribution to gender identity. Jean Webb, for example, investigates Burnett's construction of a British and Imperial identity guided by principles of social harmony, but does not examine whether and how dress images are involved in this

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[31] Carole Scott, 'Between Me and the World: Clothes as Mediator between Self and Society in the Work of Beatrix Potter', *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 16 (1992), pp. 192-98. Henceforward referred to as 'Between Me and the World' in footnotes; Carole Scott, 'Clothed in Nature or Nature Clothed', *Children's Literature*, 22 (1994), pp. 70-89 (pp. 84-85). Henceforward referred to as 'Clothed in Nature' in footnotes.

[32] Cosslett, *Talking Animals,* pp. 160-61.

[33] Charles Butler, 'Postmodernism', in Matthew O. Grenby and Kimberley Reynolds, eds., *Children's Literature Studies: A Research Handbook* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 178-84 (pp. 180-81). Henceforward referred to as 'Postmodernism' in footnotes.

[34] Jopi Nyman, 'The Tale of an English Rabbit: Gender and Nation in Beatrix Potter', *The Postcolonial Animal Tale from Kipling to Coetzee* (New Delhi: Atlantic, 2003), pp. 20-37 (pp. 24-26; 29). Henceforward referred to as 'The Tale of an English Rabbit' in footnotes.

[35] Hannah Field, 'A Few of the Author's Favorite Things: Clothes, Fetishism, and the Tailor of Gloucester', *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 34 (2010), pp. 17-33. Henceforward referred to as 'A Few of the Author's Favorite Things' in footnotes.

construction.[36] Most work that does look at dress images furthermore concerns attire in *Fauntleroy*. Interestingly, while Cedric's androgynous dress may have influenced fashion trends for boys, it also inspired biting scholarly commentary. For instance, in 1932, the historian of children's literature F. J. Harvey Darton, engaging with Cedric's attire in terms of its gender-contribution, complained that 'the odious little prig in the lace collar is not dead yet', and thus revealed the increasingly public derogatory attitude toward androgyny.[37] Some 80 years later, Cedric's androgynous identity is still being noted, though now in positive terms. For instance, if we recall, Clark describes *Fauntleroy* providing a resolution to ideas of masculinity and class. Yet, Clark's discussion unfortunately focuses mainly on how actions, not attire, construct Cedric's androgynous identity, and serves mostly to lead into her discussion of Henry James. More specific discussion of attire is found in Anna Wilson's argument of Cedric's clothes transposing feminised elements outside the domestic sphere, with Cedric externalising his mother's power to choose his dress.[38] Also interesting is Claudia Nelson's exploration of Cedric representing the celebration of a feminised male identity, functioning as 'the epitome […] of innocent influence, 'purify[ing] the strongholds and strongboxes of adult power' – as well as her claim that in *The Lost Prince* (1915), Burnett resorted to the traditional concept of manliness, replacing Cedric's androgyny with Marco's masculinised identity where physical appearance visualises a manly character who succeeds in his missions.[39] Again, however, the exploration of how this appearance is constructed through dress is limited – and is related to gender only. Little other scholarship exists on *Lost Prince*, and none of it engages with dress. The discussion of attire in relation to identity in *A Little Princess* (1905) and *The Secret Garden* (1911) is similarly limited, with Sara Crewe's dress in *Little Princess* commonly read as signifying the deceptive nature of appearance and dress in *Secret Garden* as demonstrating the dangers of ignoring natural tendencies.

In the case of Nesbit, no scholarship exists on dress in her Bastable stories. Some mention is made by Noel Streatfeild as well as Pamela Richardson of the prominent role

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[36] Jean Webb, 'Romanticism vs. Empire in The Secret Garden', in Deborah Cogan Thacker and Jean Webb, eds., *Introducing Children's Literature from Romanticism to Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 91-97. Henceforward referred to as 'Romanticism vs. Empire' in footnotes.

[37] F. J. Harvey Darton, *Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life*, 3rd edn., rev. Brian Alderson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p.233.

[38] Anna Wilson, 'Little Lord Fauntleroy: The Darling of Mothers and the Abomination of a Generation', *American Literary History*, 8.2 (Summer 1996), pp. 232-58 (pp. 234-35; 241-42; 253). Henceforward referred to as 'Little Lord Fauntleroy' in footnotes.

[39] Claudia Nelson, *Boys Will Be Girls: The Feminine Ethic and British Children's Fiction, 1857-1917* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991), pp. 19; 141-46. Henceforward referred to as *Boys Will Be Girls* in footnotes.

of petticoats in Nesbit's *Railway Children*, but again, little is said about how dress, and even more importantly undress, become central in the construction of identity.[40]

Choice of texts and illustrations

Addressing the lack of scholarship in this particular area, this study explores the contribution of discursive dress to the formation of English identity and society in children's fiction written between 1880 and 1915. The reason for choosing this particular period is that this was the time when social, political and economic developments brought about the end of a traditional mode of living and thinking, with the consequent emergence of pronounced anxiety concerning identity. Extending my exploration to the year 1915 takes us beyond the end of the Edwardian period, but also allows for the inclusion of stories that might reflect whether and how the impending or experienced war affected perceptions of identity. For by the end of Benjamin Disraeli's second ministry in 1880, industrialisation and increased job opportunities undermined the importance of lineage and heritage and gave rise to new social groups and new concepts of identity, with old binaries such as the rich and the poor, the British and the exotic, the male and the female, increasingly being debated.[41] Furthermore, at this time, childhood increasingly became the focus of national debate. This is not to say that interest in childhood had not existed prior to this time; as scholars such as Hugh Cunningham and Kimberley Reynolds emphasise, engagement with childhood can be traced back to ancient and medieval times, undermining the claim of some scholars that the perception childhood as a distinct stage emerged only in modern times.[42] Yet it is also true that the early Victorian period witnessed increased interest in childhood and now-acknowledged differences between children of different ages. Possibly, this happened owing to increasing attempts to regulate child labour through legislation,

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[40] Noel Streatfeild, 'Introduction', in Edith Nesbit, *Long Ago When I Was Young*, digitised edn. (1966; New York: Dial Books, 1987 [1966]), pp. 11-25 (p. 21), quoted in Pamela Richardson, 'Boys, Girls, and Trains: Ambiguous Gender Roles in E. Nesbit's The Railway Children', *PostScript*, 24 (2007), Papers from the 2006 Philological Association of the Carolinas conference, eds. Cindy Ho and Merritt Moseley, the University of North Carolina at Asheville, pp. 84-101.
<http://www.unca.edu/postscript/volumexxiv.html> [accessed 22.4.2008], p. 94. Henceforward referred to as 'Boys, Girls, and Trains' in footnotes.
[41] Talia Schaffer, *Literature and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (New York: Longman, 2007), p. 3; Linda K. Hughes, '1870', in Tucker, *Companion*, pp. 35-50.
[42] Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society since 1500* (London: Longman, 1995). Henceforward referred to as Cunningham, *Children and Childhood* in footnotes; Kimberley Reynolds, *Children's Literature: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 6-9. Henceforward referred to as *Children's Literature* in footnotes.

something that involved determining when childhood ended.[43] Undoubtedly, by the 1880s, the child had established its central role. Elementary education was made compulsory for children between seven and ten in 1880, a number of societies sprang up to save children in distress, legislation classified the onset of childhood as distinct from infancy and defined expectations and restrictions associated with specific ages, and the concept of girlhood (as distinct from young womanhood) emerged, at least in popular culture.[44] Obviously, talking about childhood as one unified experience would be erroneous, since, as Harvey Graff points out in his study of early North American childhood, each childhood as well as adolescence and youth, is different and diverse.[45] Nonetheless, we can say that the end of the Victorian era witnessed an increasing celebration of childhood as an ideal state of existence, with the child becoming the symbol of hope in an increasingly disillusioned nation. Along with this celebration, literature for children changed. Of course, literature specifically for children had existed prior to that: according to Matthew Grenby since the eighteenth century or, according to Kimberley Reynolds, even since the seventeenth.[46] Maybe what confuses twenty-first-century readers is the assumption that pious stories with a strict moral would not have been enjoyable for children; yet, evidence indicates the contrary: for instance, James Janeway's *A Token for Children* (1671) was mentioned as 'delight in reading' in an autobiography or described by a young reader in 1821 as 'the most entertaining book that can be'.[47] It is true though that by the mid-nineteenth century, along with changing attitudes towards children, the nature of children's books gradually changed. This is not to say that books with instructional or moralising purposes ceased to exist – they did not, as, for instance, the stories of Mrs. Molesworth evince – but increasingly stories

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[43] For more on Victorian child labour regulations, see: Clare Rose, *Making, Selling and Wearing Boys' Clothes in Late-Victorian England* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), p. 4. Henceforward referred to as Rose, *Boys' Clothes* in footnotes; Hugh Cunningham, *The Children of the Poor: Representations of Childhood since the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 94. Henceforward referred to as *The Children of the Poor* in footnotes.

[44] Cunningham, *The Children of the Poor*, p.176: For instance, the Education Act of 1876 prohibited employment of children under the age of ten; in the following year, children between 10-13 were permitted to work only part-time in factories and shops; in 1891, the age requirement was raised to 11 for full-time employment, and in 1899 to 12. Rose, *Boys' Clothes*, p.1, referring to the foundation of Dr. Barnardo's Homes (1874), The Church of England Central Society for Providing Homes for Waifs and Strays (1881) and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (1889). For the concept of girlhood, see Sally Mitchell, *The New Girl* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), pp. 6-7. Henceforward referred to as *New Girl* in footnotes.

[45] Harvey Graff, *Conflicting Paths: Growing Up in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 25, in Matthew O. Grenby, ed., *The Child Reader 1700-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 10. Henceforward referred to as *Child Reader* in footnotes.

[46] Reynolds, *Children's Literature*, pp. 6-19; Grenby, *Child Reader*, pp. 1-6.

[47] In Matthew O. Grenby, *Children's Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), p. 5. A similar point is made in Reynolds, *Children's Literature*, pp. 15-16.

were written that offered tales of fantasy and adventure.[48] Some scholars, such as Roger Lancelyn Green, cite Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871) as introducing this change; others, such as Sheila Egoff, argue it was the appearance of mass-produced magazines for boys with stories of adventure, such as *The Boys of England* (1866) or *The Boy's Standard* (1875).[49]

Now let me explain my choice of authors and the specific texts. During this period of social change that challenged the *status quo*, women were at the centre of this change, excluded from the public sphere on the one hand, and on the other participating in it. Writing became, for them, a significant tool to 'negotiate [...] this seemingly rigid barrier'.[50] The selection of specific authors was then based on the following criteria: the writers had to be popular yet have indicated, possibly indirectly through their lifestyle, some questioning of conventional norms and expectations. And second, their stories had to engage with social issues by following some form of economic, social and emotional 'from rags-to riches' pattern, where loss and recovery are both signified in terms of attire and acts of dressing, undressing, at times cross-dressing. This involved first excluding writings described in existing scholarship as more conservative, such as Juliana Horatia Ewing (1841-85) and Charlotte Mary Yonge (1823-1901).[51] Ultimately, the names of Frances Hodgson Burnett and Edith Nesbit emerged.[52] To explore textual complications of socio-political debates, I decided to focus on extended narratives with orphaned or semi orphaned child protagonists. The orphan tale traditionally allows the exposure of social 'decay' caused by waning moral values and growing materialism and, as pointed out before, opens up the space for temporary queering.[53] Since Nesbit

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[48] Roger Lancelyn Green, 'The Golden Age of Children's Books' and Sheila Egoff, 'Precepts, Pleasures, and Portents: Changing Emphases in Children's Literature', in Sheila Egoff, G.T. Stubbs, and L.F. Ashley, eds., *Only Connect: Reading in Children's Literature*, 2nd edn. (Toronto: Oxford University Press), pp. 1-16 (pp. 10-11) and pp. 405-33 (pp. 412-13) respectively. Henceforward referred to as 'The Golden Age', 'Precepts, Pleasures, and Portents' and *Only Connect* respectively in footnotes.

[49] Green, 'The Golden Age', pp. 6-7; 413-14; Egoff, 'Precepts, Pleasures, and Portents'.

[50] Joanne Shattock, 'Introduction', in Joanne Shattock, ed., *Women and Literature in Britain 1800-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 1-7 (p. 3).

[51] For more on these authors, see for instance Claudia Mills, 'Choosing a Way of Life: *Eight Cousins* and *Six to Sixteen*', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 14.2 (Summer 1989), pp. 71-75. Rpt. in *Children's Literature Review*, ed. Scot Peacock, vol. 78 (Detroit: Gale, 2002). *Literature Resource Center*; Anne Scott MacLeod, *A Moral Tale: Children's Fiction and American Culture, 1820-1860*, digitised edn. (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1975); Daniela Evans, 'Charlotte Yonge', *British Writers*: *Supplement 17*, ed. Jay Parini (Detroit: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2011). *Literature Resource Center*.

[52] See, for instance, Alison Lurie, who claims that writers such as Edith Nesbit and Frances Hodgson Burnett belonged to a group which 'tended to overturn rather than uphold the conventional values of their period or background […] Popularised new and controversial political, social, or psychological ideas', in *Don't Tell the Grown-Ups*, p. xii.

[53] Social aspects of orphan-story from: Nelson, 'Growing Up', pp. 74-79; Melanie A. Kimball, 'From Folktales to Fiction: Orphan Characters in Children's Literature', *Library Trends*, 47.3 (Winter 1999), pp. 558-78; Stockton, 'Growing Sideways'; Dirk P. Mattson, 'Finding Your Way Home: Orphan Stories in Young Adult Literature', *The Alan Review*, 24.3 (Spring 1997).

had written orphan stories both with a magical and a realistic setting, but Burnett's stories had a realistic setting in England, I decided to focus only on realistic stories set in England. In Nesbit's case, this led me to choosing *The Wouldbegoods* (1901) and *The New Treasure Seekers* (1902), and in Burnett's case, the aforementioned *Fauntleroy* and *The Lost Prince* as well as *A Little Princess, Being the Whole Story of Sara Crewe Now Told for the First Time* (1905) and *The Secret Garden* (1911).

The criterion of popularity and of a lifestyle suggesting some resistance to norms, however, also brought to the forefront Beatrix Potter, a prolific female writer whose life, as already mentioned, had been characterised by oppression and resistance. Initially, I hesitated to include Potter in my discussion since although her stories engage with a variety of issues through dress images, they do so through the animal and not the child body. I then considered, however, that animal characters can function as a surrogate for the child character, with anthropomorphism being a literary device with ancient roots. Given that anthropomorphism suggests fantasy, I was still hesitant to include Potter in my discussion; however, I then also considered that her stories are not located in an isolated fantasy world, but in locations that were inspired by the woods, villages and places in the Lake District where Potter spent many of her holidays.[54] Initially, I planned to consider only stories featuring orphaned or semi-orphaned child animals and thus decided to follow Tom Kitten's fate in *The Tale of Tom Kitten* (1907) and *The Tale of Samuel Whiskers or The Roly-Poly Pudding* (1908) and that of Peter Rabbit in *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902), *The Tale of Benjamin Bunny* (1904), *The Tale of the Flopsy Bunnies* (1909) and *The Tale of Mr. Tod* (1912) as well as that of the eponymous hero in *The Tale of Pigling Bland* (1913). However, I had to acknowledge that Potter's stories are not self-contained tales that begin on the first page and end on the last since plotlines continue from one tale to another and main characters that appear in one story make their appearance in other stories either as main or secondary ones – something which implied that reading some stories in isolation from others might lead to ignoring valuable insights. I also had to acknowledge that my discussion of dress in the selected stories by Burnett and Nesbit would at times also involve addressing the attire of adult characters. Focusing on stories where attire added to plot, I thus also included *The Tale of Two Bad Mice* (1904), *The Tale of Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle* (1905), *The Tale of Jeremy Fisher* (1906), *The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck* (1908), *The Tale of Ginger and Pickles*

<http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/ALAN/spring97/s97-17-Mattson.html> [accessed 16.4.2005]; Queering aspects of orphan-stories from Zaborskis, 'Orphaning Queerness'.

54 For instance, Fawe Park, where Potter vacationed once, featured in *The Tale of Benjamin Bunny* (1904), while Hill Top Farm in Near Sawrey, which Potter had visited first in 1896 and then bought in 1905, became the setting for *The Tale of Samuel Whiskers or The Roly-Poly Pudding* (1908).

(1909), *The Tale of Mrs. Tittlemouse* (1910), *The Tale of Timmy Tiptoes* (1911) and *The Tale of the Pie and the Patty-Pan* (1911).

Deciding to include Potter in this study, however, also required me to provide some context for the representations of clothed animals in fiction. Giving detailed examination of all representations of clothed animals over a period of a hundred years would have been interesting, but beyond the scope of this study. Thus, I decided to focus on texts containing anthropomorphised animals that wear clothes or whose natural dress is referred to as attire, were widely read during their times, contained some form of social commentary, and are still considered as having played a crucial role in the development of the children's literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[55] These criteria narrowed down the choices to an early nineteenth-century string of animal poems, beginning with William Roscoe's *Butterfly's Ball* (1806) and ending with *The Lobster's Voyage to the Brazils* (1808) by an unnamed author, referred to by Mary Jackson as 'papillonades'. Charles Kingsley's *Water Babies* (1862-63), Louis Carroll's Alice-texts, Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Books* (1894-95) and Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) emerged as prime examples of works that refer to dressed non-humans and (anthropomorphised) animals or that refer to animals' natural cover as attire for either animal or human usage. Hence, my study ultimately focuses on key texts produced by women authors between 1880 and 1915, but also devotes a chapter to texts produced during the longer nineteenth century and by male authors as well.

Illustrations

The choice of authors and texts, especially once Beatrix Potter had been involved, also meant acknowledging the accompanying illustrations and their potential contribution to meaning. This, however, gave rise to the problem of deciding which illustrations to consider, as different editions included illustrations by different illustrators. Given that the interest of this study was the contribution of these texts to contemporary perceptions of gender, class and nation through dress, it made sense to examine the illustrations that

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[55] This selection has taken as point of reference Cosslett's selection of authors and texts discussed in *Talking Animals*, an exceptional study of anthropomorphised animals in British children's fiction written during the time period examined in my study. See particularly pp. 37-61; 93-180.

appeared along with the text when it made its first appearance.[56] Even that involved some problems, however, especially when it came to animal fiction. In Potter's case, which included her own illustrations, I examined the illustrations that accompanied the published stories, not the ones produced often years before, when the stories were conceived. In the case of Roscoe, I examined the very different illustrations, created by the same illustrator, but for two editions published one year apart, since it was through a comparison that complex, nuanced meaning emerged. In the case of Grahame's *Wind in the Willows*, which was initially published without illustrations, reference is nonetheless made to illustrations added in 1931 and drawn by Ernest Howard Shepard given Grahame's pleasure at seeing his characters given form. Grahame may have died before seeing the completed work, but he did see the work in process and 'seemed pleased and, chuckling, said, "I'm glad you've made them real"'.[57] In the case of Carroll, the choice was once again challenging. Carroll's own illustrations accompanying the original manuscript *Alice's Adventures Under Ground* (1864) depict, as Renée Riese Hubert points out, only the White Rabbit as attired, both in the plain attire of the times and in a more elaborate costume, resembling a herald, during the trial. However, I chose to examine the Tenniel illustrations accompanying the first edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, not Carroll's own, for two reasons. First, it made sense to look at illustrations where many animals are dressed, given my interest in sartorial images. Second, Carroll himself was very favourably inclined towards Tenniel's visualisation of the Alice stories.[58] He worked closely together with Tenniel concerning the *Alice*-drawings, supplying exact specifications and demands for changes; he also insisted on Tenniel as illustrator for *Through the Looking Glass*, rejecting other illustrators, such as Richard Doyle and Arthur Hughes. To not turn this study into an exploration of *Alice* and the illustrations, I have also chosen to examine only the black-and-white illustrations to the first editions, thus disregarding the changes made in collaboration

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[56] This does not mean that these illustrations necessarily visualise in any best way potential or intended textual meaning or necessarily represent the author's choice (although they often do of course).

[57] See Ernest Howard Shepard 'Illustrating "The Wind in the Willows"', in Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows* (1908; New York: Aladdin, 1989), [n.p.].

[58] For more information on the selection of Tenniel as illustrator see: Renée Riese Hubert, *Surrealism and the Book* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Michael Hancher, *The Tenniel Illustrations to the "Alice" Books* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1985), p. 27; Rose Lovell-Smith, 'The Animals of Wonderland: Tenniel as Carroll's Reader', *Criticism*, 45 (2003), pp. 383-415; William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1935); Isabelle Nières, 'Tenniel: The Logic behind His Interpretation of the Alice Books', in Rachel Fordyce and Carla Marcello, eds., *Semiotics and Linguistics in Alice's Worlds* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994), pp. 194-208. Both Carroll and Tenniel attributed great importance to the illustrations in *Alice* and *Looking Glass*. They rejected copies of *Alice* published by Clarendon Press in June 1865 because of unsatisfactory quality, and employed new printers.

between Carroll and Tenniel such as the addition of colours or Alice's hair-ribbon and sash.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this study is quite broad, given that different, and at times, contradictory, social, cultural and political theories have been employed in my exploration of how the physical body, clothed or unclothed, is involved in the construction of identity. This may at times seem to result in a contradictory discussion, but in fact, such an approach allowed me to avoid monolithic and simplistic discussions. For these theories were not employed as a reductive code, but rather as a lens that allowed me to elucidate ways of accessing images and stories in more complex and creative ways.

Anthony Giddens' exploration of identity as a self-reflective endeavour was of immense value.[59] Giddens focuses on the post-traditional era where religion, custom and family have lost their shaping influence on identity and examines how individuals now have the obligation or freedom to assume agency for their identity. I approached the *fin-de-siècle* as an era when many individuals found themselves distanced from the institutions that had customarily shaped their lives and selves through '*exploitation*, *inequality* and *oppression*'.[60] I then decided to examine whether fictional characters indeed engage in a self-reflective endeavour of writing themselves into existence or whether they passively accept a normative identity imposed upon them.

To understand the importance of dress in the formulation of identity, some works on dress production and consumption (among the many consulted) proved particularly helpful. Joanne Entwistle's *The Fashioned Body* (2000) helped me understand the importance of body within culture and how dress becomes a situated bodily practice, serving as an important element of social order. Valuable for this study was also the analysis provided by Jessica Munns and Penny Richards in the introduction to *The Clothes That Wear Us. Essays on Dressing and Transgressing in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (1999), which emphasises how the location of dress in the 'wider context of social custom and material culture' helps understand 'the conceptual loading and

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[59] Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1991). Hereafter referred to as *Modernity and Self-Identity* in footnotes.
[60] Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, p.211. Italics in the original.

cultural associations articulated by the "language of clothing".[61] Fred Davis' *Fashion, Culture, and Identity* (1994), especially the first chapter 'Do Clothes Speak What Makes Them Fashion?', provided me with intriguing ideas concerning the social and psychological significance of attire, in a society characterised by tensions concerning social, gender and sexual identity.[62] Christopher Breward's work, focusing on clothing consumption and the formation of masculine identities was invaluable for understanding how dress serves as a medium in the negotiations and expressions of sexual and social identity, regardless of sex. Iris Brooke's work on costume was also very valuable, as it deepened my understanding of the relationship between children's fashion and social changes, such as that when children's fashion of the late eighteenth century began differing from adult fashion, we see reflected the perception of childhood as a separate stage from adulthood.[63] A very interesting work, reflecting the paradigm shift of sartorial research, is Clare Rose's *Making, Selling and Wearing Boys' Clothes in Late-Victorian England* (2010). Rose's work is, for the time being, unfortunately one of the few that explores in such detail how production and consumption of boys' attire of all classes between 1875 and 1900 are vital in the formulation of contemporary concepts of gender and age. Christine Bayles Kortsch's *Dress Culture in Late Victorian Women's Fiction: Literacy, Textiles, and Activism* (2009) was invaluable, as it showed how women writers employed their 'dual literacy', of both the 'language of print and the language of cloth' to engage with readers and contemporary debates.[64] My understanding of how sartorial language allows authors to construct characters' identities was significantly shaped by Simon Gatrell's *Thomas Hardy Writing Dress* (2011), a study that draws attention to how dress in Hardy's novels adds to the characters' identity.[65] Equally valuable was the collection of essays in *Styling Texts: Dress and Fashion in Literature* (2007).[66]

To understand authorial participation in discourses of identity through sartorial images further, this study relied extensively on Michel Foucault's, Mikhail Bakhtin's and Terry Castle's work on the relationship between discourse, meaning and power.

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[61] Jessica Munns and Penny Richards, 'Introduction': "The Clothes That Wear Us", in Jessica Munns and Penny Richards, eds., *The Clothes That Wear Us: Essays on Dressing and Transgressing in Eighteenth-Century Culture* (London: Associated University Presses, 1999), pp. 9-32 (p. 11).
[62] Fred Davis, *Fashion, Culture, and Identity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).Hereafter referred to as *Fashion* in footnotes.
[63] Iris Brooke, *English Children's Costume 1775-1920* (1930; New York: Dover, 2003).
[64] Christine Bayles Kortsch, *Dress Culture in Late Victorian Women's Fiction: Literacy, Textiles, and Activism* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), p. 183. Hereafter referred to as *Dress Culture* in footnotes.
[65] Simon Gatrell, *Thomas Hardy Writing Dress* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011).
[66] Cynthia Kuhn, and Cindy Carlson, eds. *Styling Texts: Dress and Fashion in Literature* (New York: Cambria Press, 2007).

Foucault's early theories were enlightening and explained how power is exerted by institutional bodies and maintained by subjecting the body to mechanisms of control.[67] His later work, however, was invaluable, since it highlighted the importance of discourses of norms and normality as well as the significant role of individuals in the shaping of socio-political ideology – and thus the role of fiction within society.[68] According to Foucault, social control is maintained through voluntarily exercised self-discipline, since individuals wish to conform. In other words, according to Foucault, power is not imposed from the top but circulates within society, with institutions, individuals and even ideas constituting these bodies. The body itself serves as a site of regulation, with docile bodies being produced to maintain social and political order. It is true that Foucault's theory suggests that, given our voluntary acceptance of norms, we lack individual agency and that there is no resistance. Nonetheless, Foucault's theory does shed light on how (sartorial) discourses intersect with socio-political discourses as well as how these discourses develop beyond coercive mechanisms of control.

My understanding of how discourses may intersect with (attempts at) resistance and subversion was further shaped by Bakhtin's work on the carnivalesque in *Rabelais and his World* (1965), a work that explores the French Renaissance writer François Rabelais' series of five novels *The Life of Gargantua and Pantagruel* (c.1532-64). Bakhtin's discussion proved relevant specifically to my discussion of sartorial images in animal stories, where animals are depicted, verbally and pictorially, as dressing up as humans by donning artificial dress or where the animals' natural cover is referred to in sartorial terms.[69] And in many of these stories, this dress engagement is associated with attempts at transgression of natural and social hierarchies. Bakhtin's theory was useful as it allows a deeper understanding of all practices associated with all manners of visual spectacles and verbal compositions (and not just days and feasts of carnival celebration) where social hierarchies are temporarily suspended or inverted. According to Bakhtin, the carnival expresses an upside-down world and offers people from different social strata the opportunity to disregard social criteria and come together to collectively

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[67] Referring to Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, trans. R. Howard (London: Tavistock Publications, 1961); Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1966; New York: Vintage Books, 1973); Foucault, 'Introduction', in Hercule Barbin, *Being the Recently Discovered Memoirs of a Nineteenth-Century French Hermaphrodite*, trans. Richard McDougall (New York: Pantheon, 1980), pp. vii-xvii; Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (1975; Hopkinton, M.A.: Vintage Books, 1995).

[68] Referring to Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I, The Will to Knowledge, vol. 1,* trans. Robert Hurley (1978; New York: Random House-Vintage Books, 1990), pp. 100–01.

[69] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (1965; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009).Hereafter referred to as *Rabelais* in footnotes.*Rabelais* is based on a doctoral dissertation titled *Rabelais and Folk Culture of the Middle Ages and Renaissance* that was submitted 1940 to the Gorky Institute of World Literature in Moscow.

challenge and resist the *status quo*. As Bakhtin puts it, 'the carnival spirit offers the chance to have a new outlook on the world, to realise the relative nature of all that exists, and to enter a completely new order of things'.[70] However, Bakhtin's work also highlights the temporary nature of such anarchic expression and posits the carnival as a contained spectacle, offering those involved only temporary escape from the dominant order. For indeed, by reading the stories in a Bakhtinian framework, it became possible to see how the discursive animals are given the opportunity to express potential frustrations, but how ultimately, order is restored and an end is put to attempts at the upheaval of the old order.

Bakhtin's theory, however, proved less valuable for the remaining parts of this study. For while my exploration of sartorial images in the stories not featuring animals did point to a subversive subtext, these stories did not feature a topsy-turvy world and a temporary suspension of hierarchies. However, inspired by Terry Castle's *Masquerade and Civilization* (1986), a thought-provoking reading of masquerade and the function of the transvestite that follows Bakhtin's discussion of the carnivalesque, I consulted extensively scholarship of Queer theory, such as Judith Butler's, Marjorie Garber's and Victoria Flanagan's work on cross-dressing.[71] These works, which critically engage the literary canon by exposing repressive mechanisms or the transgression of norms, illustrate how discourses on gender stereotypes function in children's texts, challenging or perpetuating existing and normative gender stereotypes.

Butler admittedly focuses on gender and does not deal with attire extensively. However, her theory that gender and identity are not fixed but created through social norms is particularly useful in an exploration of how identity can be confirmed and challenged through dress – and particularly if read in tandem with Foucault's theory of the production of docile body addressed earlier. Butler in fact re-appropriates Foucault's theory and complicates concepts of gender when she stresses that gender is not 'a choice, or […] a role, or […] a construction that one puts on, as one puts on clothes in the morning' and there is not 'a subject intact, prior to its gendering'.[72] Particularly interesting was Butler's argument that our acts are determined by our place in language

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[70] Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, p. 34.
[71] Garber, *Vested Interests*; Victoria Flanagan, *Into the Closet: Cross-Dressing and the Gendered Body in Children's Literature and Film* (New York: Routledge, 2008). Hereafter referred to as *Into the Closet* in footnotes; Victoria Flanagan, 'Reframing Masculinity', Judith Butler, 'Critically Queer', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 1.1 (November 1993), pp. 17-32 (p. 21); Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993). Henceforward referred to as *Bodies that Matter*; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990; New York: Routledge, 1999). Hereafter referred to as *Gender Trouble* in footnotes; Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004).
[72] 'Butler, 'Critically Queer', p 21.

and convention, and not by our conscious choice.[73] As Butler puts it, gender is performative in that 'it is the *effect* of a regulatory regime of gender differences in which genders are divided and hierarchized *under constraint*', such as through '[s]ocial constraints, taboos, prohibitions, threats of punishment' that lead to 'repetition of norms'.[74] And resulting from this repetition is gender as a '*stylized repetition of acts*'.[75]

Initially, it seemed impossible to interrogate authorial engagement with gender identity through reference to both Giddens' and Butler's theories, given his somewhat essentialist approach and her rejection of the concept of an underlying substantial identity and of the body as a natural entity. However, Butler in fact does not reject the potential for the intervention and disruption of gender patterns, perceiving the possibility for resistance from within the gender system.[76] For as Butler argues, if gender, as an effect, is produced through a repetition of acts and there is an 'arbitrary relation' between these acts, then there can be a 'breaking or subversive repetition' when subjects, assuming agency, defy norms and perform a different gender, thereby reinscribing their body.[77] This argument allowed me to complement Foucault's theories that shed doubt on the possibility for resistance. Butler's discussion of drag performances as upsetting for instance the discourses that naturalise gender was particularly interesting for my study. According to Butler, the transvestite, through drag, parodies the gendered body and destabilises the binary model of gender, with men cross-dressing as women and women cross-dressing as men.[78] Drag, by imitating the imitation, exposes that appearances are illusive and that our belief in stable identities and gender differences are enforced 'by social sanction and taboo'.[79] Of further value was Butler's assertion that there are also '*racializing norms*' that 'exist not merely alongside gender norms, but are articulated through one another'.[80] While Butler's analysis, by focusing predominantly on how perceptions of sex inform race and vice versa, was not overly pertinent to my study, it did help me better understand how hegemonic perceptions of national identity could be disturbed by discourses that did not fit into established categories. It is true, Butler's contention that [p]arody by itself is not subversive', since it might simply reinforce distinctions of sex and biological gender,

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[73] Judith Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory', *Theater Journal*, 40.4 (Dec., 1988), 519-531. Hereafter referred to as 'Performative Acts' in the footnotes.
[74] Judith Butler, 'Critically Queer', p. 21. Italics in the original.
[75] Judith Butler, 'Performative Acts', p. 519. Italics in the original.
[76] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, pp. 201-03.
[77] Butler, 'Performative Acts', p.520.
[78] Butler, 'Performative Acts', p.520.
[79] Butler, 'Performative Acts', p.520.
[80] Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, p. 182. Italics in the original.

suggests that ultimately, subversion is impossible since the subject is so entrapped within the discourses that condition it that it lacks the power to alter discourses.[81] Nonetheless, Butler does admit for the possibility that the subject can script a self-identity.

Given that Butler's conception of performativity contributed to the method of queering literary discourses, I also consulted other Queer theorists, whose works engage more with dress images. Especially Garber's and Flanagan's work added deeper understanding of how cross-dressing can be employed to confuse the construction of gender binaries, and thus challenge the status quo. In *Vested Interests* (1993), Garber describes transvestism as '*a space of possibility structuring and confounding culture*: the disruptive element that intervenes, not just a category crisis of male and female, but the crisis of category itself', with the cross-dresser becoming the marker of the crises of meaning that challenge binary thinking.[82] Of course, Garber's arguments imply the perception that the cross-dresser always serves to exposes the failure of binary thinking and not in fact to dismiss threats to the *status quo*. Nonetheless, her arguments were extremely useful in my interrogation of the cross-dressing plot and the construction or de-construction of normative gender identities, especially if read alongside Flanagan's *Into the Closet* (2008). Flanagan, drawing on the work of Butler and Garber as well as Bakhtin, examines how cross-dressing in children's fiction can serve to either 'confirm or to interrogate conventional gender boundaries'.[83] Particularly useful was Flanagan's discussion of the differences in the depiction of female and male cross-dressing. Flanagan, employing Butler's theory of performativity, perceives the first as depicted as being done willingly, 'to flee an oppressive gender regime', while she argues, by employing Bakhtin's carnivalesque theory, that the latter is depicted as done unwillingly and as involving humiliation owing to the inability 'to discard their masculine subjectivity in favour of a feminine one'.[84] The consequence is, according to Flanagan, that female-to-male cross-dressing results in 'call[ing] gender itself into question', while male-to-female cross-dressing, by depicting a topsy-turvy world and relying on burlesque humour, rarely questions established gender perceptions.[85]

Flanagan's focus on female-to-male cross-dressing made her theories only somewhat relevant for a reading of stories that feature mostly male-to-female cross-dressing episodes. Nonetheless, taken together, the theories of gender and of the

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[81] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 176.
[82] Garber, *Vested Interests*, p. 17. Italics in the original.
[83] Flanagan, *Into the Closet*, p. 13.
[84] Flanagan, *Into the Closet*, pp. 12-14.
[85] Flanagan, *Into the Closet*, pp. 13-15.

construction of cross-dressing in (children's) literature by Butler, Garber and Flanagan provided me with intriguing insight as to how to explore whether and how discursive dress images question supposedly natural assumptions about gender as discursively and culturally constructed. Scholarship on the orphan-figure, such as by Zaborskis and Kathryn Bond Stockton does not deal with attire, but, as already shown in my discussion of Tom Kitten, further allowed me to challenge conventional readings and uncover a rich and fascinating subtext.[86]

Given that my study focuses on texts that include illustrations, I also had the opportunity of exploring how the viewers' gaze is shaped, controlled or confused by the interplay of text and image. For this purpose, the theory of feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey on the interplay between gaze and construction of gender proved particularly useful. Mulvey initially perceived femininity as constructed by the male heterosexual gaze that constructs woman into an object of desire, but then revised her position, admitting to the possibility of a female gaze.[87] My study does not explore only the depiction of female characters, but Mulvey's theory does allow for better understanding of how the textual body becomes bearer of meaning through the author coding the character's appearance.

Method

My examination of whether and how stories reflect and contribute through verbal and pictorial sartorial images to the construction version of identity involved rigorous close reading. This meant first identifying and collecting verbal and pictorial images of dress, undress and cross-dress. Second, it required determining whether and how these dress images might be employed to participate in ongoing socio-political debates of the times. For that, I engaged in careful historical contextualisation of a variety of elements, such as the depiction of verbal and pictorial attire, for instance in terms of material, country of production and fashionability; the purpose it is worn, for instance as a costume or disguise, out of financial need or owing to parental pressures; the characters'

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[86] For more on Queer reading of the orphan-figure, see for example *Over the Rainbow: Queer Children's and Young Adult Literature,* eds. Michelle Ann Abate and Kenneth Kidd (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011).

[87] Laura Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', originally published in *Screen*, 16.3 (Autumn 1975), pp. 6-18, p. 4. <http://www.jahsonic.com/VPNC.html> [accessed 17.6.2009]; and Laura Mulvey, 'Afterthoughts on Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', in *Feminism and Film Theory*, ed. C. Penley (1981; New York: Routledge, 1988), pp. 69-72.

relationship with this attire, such as desire to don it, doff it, protect it from or repossess it after enforced removal. Next, I assessed whether the identified sartorial commentary was sufficient to draw meaningful conclusions. In some cases, this meant admitting it was not, and thus rejecting the story for further analysis; in others, it meant acknowledging its richness. In the latter instances, I proceeded to carefully examine whether these dress images express authorial support for or challenge of existing hierarchies and established mechanisms of control. The last step was to explore whether this authorial engagement through dress added to contemporary constructions of identity – and, if so, what versions of identity were proposed. This involved closely examining whether and how the characters' concern about and treatment of attire was related to their perception of themselves and others.

Structure of this thesis

This thesis is divided into five main chapters. As already mentioned, three of these chapters explore how sartorial images add to textual meaning in stories by Burnett, Nesbit and Potter. They are preceded by a chapter exploring the use of dress images in poems and stories featuring anthropomorphised animals written between the beginning of the nineteenth century and 1880. Chapter Two discusses sartorial trends of the period leading into *fin-de-siècle* fashion to provide what Pierre Bourdieu refers to as 'the cultural competence, that is, the code, into which it [the meaning and interest] is encoded'.[88] Thus, to be able to tease out the complexities constructed through dress in the selected stories, I explore how sartorial rhetoric was bound up in ongoing socio-political debates and constructions of identity, being influenced by them, adding to them, complicating them. This chapter also briefly discusses how nineteenth-century printing developments influenced the prominence as well as the specificity of pictorial dress in people's everyday lives – given that this pictorial dress was in the authors' minds when writing and in the readers' minds when reading the stories discussed.

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[88] Jamie W. Johnson, 'The Changing Representation of the Art Public in "Punch", 1841-1896', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 35.3 (Fall, 2002), pp. 272-94 (p. 283), referring to Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 2.

Chapter 2
Dress and the Child: Sartorial Representations in Victorian Times

Do not look upon all this that I am telling you about the clothes as uncalled for or spun out, for they have a great deal to do with the story.[1]

Society and magazines, clothes and illustrations

Cervantes was quite right: the use of sartorial images to add to textual meaning dates back to Anglo-Saxon times. For instance, *Beowulf* (c.8th-11th century) is a poem replete with dress images which have proven central to addressing the existing uncertainty surrounding this poem concerning literary, political and social influences, religious subtext and, hence, identity-construction. Since *Beowulf*, dress has played a vital role in both life and literature. On the one hand, it helps naturalise national, social and gender identities through the perpetuation of contemporary sartorial norms. On the other, it serves to challenge, complicate and undermine these identities through sartorial transgression in the form of cross-dress as well as disregard of sumptuary laws and fashion dictates. In the Victorian period, when a number of intellectual, philosophical, scientific and spiritual ideas coalesced to challenge the understanding of self-identity, the (un)dressed body was still employed, in both fiction and non-fiction, to engage with social issues and identity. Clothes became a site of contestation between waning and rising social groups, a 'forum in which social, sexual and cultural identities were formed'. As Thomas Carlyle argues in his exploration of political structures of Victorian authority in *Sartor Resartus* (serial format 1833-34; as novel 1836), '[s]ociety is founded upon Cloth'.[2]

My argument is that dress in literature for children written after 1880 reveals a complex, at times contradictory subtext by proposing a more nuanced, even transgressive identity that refuses to be (sartorially) confined by social, national and gender expectations. For within social, national and gender debates, the (un)dressed body of the child negotiates with its assumed innocence and pliability the determinants

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[1] From Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote* (1605), (1:51), quoted in Cynthia Kuhn and Cindy Carlson, 'Introduction', in Cynthia Kuhn and Cindy Carlson, eds., *Styling Texts. Dress and Fashion in Literature* (New York: Cambria Press, 2007), pp. 1-11 (p. 1).
[2] Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, ed. Harvey Peter Sucksmith, in *World's Classics* (1836; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 75.

of class, nation and gender – and is in turn affected by this debate.[3] The complexity of the figure of the dressed child can be understood perfectly with reference to two quite conflicting statements that reflect contemporary constructions of the child's gender. On the one hand, and according to Clare Rose, 'by the 1880s there seemed to be much less of an emphasis on gender differentiation'.[4] On the other, and according to Claudia Nelson, gender by the beginning of the Edwardian Era had become polarised –and the 'typical fictional Edwardian boy can never be mistaken for a girl in breeches'.[5] These are very different perceptions of how gender was signalled and understood, suggesting that significant changes occurred within thirty years. Certainly, by the end of the nineteenth century, a discursive, material and visual culture expanded, focusing on the emotional and physical health of young children owing to a multiplicity of factors, such as the Education Act of 1870, fears about racial degeneracy fuelled by the Boer War, and the proliferation of organisations and homes for orphans and poor children. The child came to the forefront of socio-political discussions that ultimately went far beyond its own emotional and physical existence. Along with the discursive child, its discursive body also came to the forefront, serving as a site upon which dress or undress expressed engagement with a multitude of social issues.

Public discourse of dress was aided by nineteenth-century printing developments that brought pictorial dress to the forefront. The publication of secular magazines, written for specific audiences, increased after the mid-point of the century, spurred on by improved printing methods, reduced paper prices and increased literacy rates. These, in turn, allowed an increased number of people to buy them at lower prices. In these magazines, changes in technology also permitted increasingly extensive use of pictorial material of better quality, be that cartoons, illustrations, advertisements or fashion plates. What is important is to remember is that this pictorial material was shaped by social, cultural, political and economic conditions, but also by women's and men's, girls' and boys' experience of femininity and masculinity, girlhood and boyhood, Englishness and class – and in turn shaped these experiences. Any cartoon, advertisement, illustration and fashion plate published should not be considered the faithful reproduction of current fashion trends and lived experience – rather, they depended on and were shaped by editorial ideologies, choices and commentary as well as readers' interests and needs. For instance, early women's magazines, between 1830

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[3] Laura C. Berry, *The Child, the State, and the Victorian Novel* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1999), p. 2.
[4] Rose, *Boys' Clothes,* p. 207.
[5] Nelson, *Boys Will Be Girls*, p. 30.

and 1840, relied extensively on the readers' involvement, for instance through 'comments on the last number, requests for advice, or sometimes with poems or articles for inclusion'.[6] Subsequently, they established themselves as 'guide and mentor' and, finally, in the 1890s as 'friend'.[7] Examples of illustrated contemporary newspapers, magazines and periodicals that were widely read and thus shaped public perceptions include *Punch* (1841-2002), a weekly magazine that provides rich visual representation of current social, cultural and political life; *The Cornhill Magazine* (1860-1916) and *Once a Week* (1859-80), both of which were directed at the middle class and accompanied by literary texts with illustrations; or *English Illustrated Magazine* (1883-1913), containing travel and literary features.

Also relevant is that during Victorian times, magazines became increasingly audience-specific. While it cannot be claimed that this itself entails a subversion of the dominant ideology, we need to acknowledge that by increasingly catering for the needs and interests of particular groups of people defined by their age, gender, or class, these magazines brought new constructions into existence. Within these constructions, the child body very frequently was dressed into specific roles that echo contemporary attempts to either contain or challenge identity. Beauty magazines for women flourished, such as the cheaper *Myra's Journal of Dress and Fashion* (1875-1912); *The Ladies Gazette of Fashion* (1834-94); *The World of Fashion* (1824-79) or the more expensive *Le Follet* (1846-1900). There were also more general women's magazines, such as *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* (1852-79) and *The Queen* (1861-1922).[8] Magazines aimed only at young women of between 13 and 25 also existed, such as *The Young Ladies' Journal* (1864-1920) and *Young Englishwoman* (1864-66). For boys, there were, for instance, the *Boy's Own Magazine* (1855-62), continued as *The Boys Own Volume* (*Beeton's Boy's Annual*) (1863-69) and *Boy's Own Magazine, Beeton's Fact, Fiction etc* (1870-74); *Boys of England: A Magazine of Sport, Sensation, Fun, and Instruction* (1866-93), continued then as *Boys of England and Jack Harkaway's Journal for Boys* (1893-99). Furthermore, as perceptions of childhood and the child changed, demands for magazines aimed at the juvenile market increased. A new generation of magazines emerged, aimed at the very specific audience of girls who

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[6] Margaret Beetham and Kay Boarman, *Victorian Women's Magazines: An Anthology* (2001; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 4. Henceforward referred to as *Victorian Women's Magazines* in footnotes.

[7] Beetham and Boarman, *Victorian Women's Magazines*, pp. 4-5.

[8] Anna Krugovy Silver, *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body* (2002; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 28-41. Henceforward referred to as *Victorian Literature* in text and footnotes; Kay Boardman, '"A Material Girl in a Material World": The Fashionable Female Body in Victorian Women's Magazines', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 3.1 (1998), pp. 93-110 (pp. 94-95).

were not young women yet, such as the highly popular *Girl's Own Paper* (1880-1900) or the middle-class girl's magazine *Atalanata* (1887-98). The list does not end there; there were also magazines directed at younger readers such as *Little Folks: The Magazine for Boys and Girls; A Magazine for the Young* (1871-1900).[9] These magazines all contained illustrations depicting children alongside adult men and women and thus provided images of how respective readers should dress their offspring according to fashion trend – but they also provided images of how they should dress the future adults of England according to their specific class and gender identities.

Some of the aforementioned publications were fashion magazines, promoting contemporary dress trends and using fashion plates to visualise these trends; others were general-content magazines, commenting on contemporary cultural, social and political developments, and using illustrations to enhance the commentary. Advertisements to promote contemporary dress items existed across a range of magazines. Obviously, fashion plates, advertisements and cartoons are very different media, with different purposes – advertisements, for instance, are meant to help sell garments, while cartoons employ garments as part of their pictorial and verbal socio-political commentary. Furthermore, as Lindsy M. Lawrence points out, dress in magazines such as *Punch* and *Macmillan's* also served a very different purpose than fashion magazines, again employed for socio-political commentary.[10] Furthermore, obviously it would be misleading to assume that an examination of a few fashion plates, illustrations, advertisements and cartoons from one or two magazines could reveal nuances of dress or permit generalising about fashion. The detailed work necessary for this task has been done by other critics and is not the point of this chapter.[11] This chapter, rather, explores, through reference to contemporary sources, how dress became intertwined with socio-political debates.

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[9] Beetham and Boarman, *Victorian Women's Magazines*, pp. 70-71.

[10] Lindsy M. Lawrence, *Seriality and Domesticity: The Victorian Serial and Domestic Ideology in the Family Literary Magazine* (Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest Information and Learning Company, 2008), pp. 177-78.

[11] See for instance Patricia A. Cunningham, *Reforming Women's Fashion, 1850-1920: Politics, Health and Art* (2003; Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 2006). Henceforward referred to as *Reforming Women's Fashion* in footnotes; Beetham and Boarman, *Victorian Women's Magazines*, Rose, *Boys' Clothes*; Kortsch, *Dress Culture*.

Children and dress in Victorian times

An early example of how the child body was dressed in the 1840s and how its sartorial representation functioned in contemporary gender debates is the painting that served as the *Frontispiece* of Sarah Ellis' *The Women of England* (1843).[12] This work discusses women's social duties and posits that while men hold a superior position in society, they also depend on a woman's moral strength to guide and advise them (Figure 2.1). As John Tosh puts it, this illustration constructs mother and children 'as an icon for male contemplation'. Two men are standing in the background; mother and children are located in the forefront, exposed both to the men's and the readers' gaze.[13]

Careful analysis furthermore exposes the sartorial ways the young boy and girl are employed in this construction of realms and how they are both affected by these constructions. Of course, society has always been pluralistic, with extensive differences between families, classes and locations; yet mid-Victorian masculinity overall involved male engagement with the public sphere of business as well as domestic space, even if parenting was considered, until the 1880s, a female responsibility.[14] The mother and children in this illustration are safely encased in domestic space, while the men, standing within the door opening, appear to find themselves on the border between the public, masculinised and the private, feminised spheres. And although both men and the boy are conceptually linked by being dressed in dark colours, the presence of the three females dressed in light colours (that express feminised purity) between the boy and the men places the boy out of reach, in an androgynous realm, partly subsumed under his mother's skirt. It is interesting to note that both the boy's and the young girl's attire express contemporary perceptions of children as outside gender. The boy is wearing a Cavalier-style dress that further feminises him, in relation to the men. The younger girl is wearing pantalettes (or pantaloons) under her skirt, which masculinise her. These pantalettes, long drawers trimmed with ruffles that extended below the skirts, were introduced in the 1820s and aroused great controversy because they were believed to be 'undermining society's natural order', given that trouser-wearing was considered something men did.[15]

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[12] Sara Ellis, *The Women of England: Their Social Duties, and Domestic Habits*, digitised edn. (1843; London: Fisher, Son & Co., [1845 (?)]).

[13] John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (Bury St. Edmunds: St. Edmundsbury Press, 2007), p. 49. Hereafter referred to as *Man's Place* in footnotes.

[14] Tosch, *Man's Place*, pp. 27-34; 47-50.

[15] Colleen R. Callahan and Jo B. Paoletti, 'Is it a Girl or a Boy? Gender Identity and Children's Clothing", in Linda Welters and Abby Lillethun, eds., *The Fashion Reader*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Berg, 2011), pp. 193-96 (p. 195).

Such de-gendering of the child is not to be found only in artistic compositions. Sartorial de-gendering was fashionable in the mid-Victorian era, as contemporary illustrations and fashion plates indicate – and it needs to be understood within contemporary gender and class debates on masculinity and femininity. During early Victorian times, popular belief was that people needed to improve themselves morally while on earth, and children, especially, were considered in need of moral instruction to help them become morally responsible adults. Tales of young children striving for moral improvement by recognising their innate depravity and learning the importance of filial obedience and respectability had been prevalent in early- nineteenth-century children's fiction, such as in Mary Martha Sherwood's *The History of the Fairchild Family* (three volumes, 1818, 1842 and 1847). Then there was also the relatively widely-held mid-century belief that men were governed by their sexual urges and hence contributed to the existence of prostitution and venereal diseases, while women, with their innate purity, offered the solution to problems (caused by men). The result of these perceptions was expressed in the construction of the child, particularly the boy, as yet non-gendered and hence still pure. Let us first look at how fashion for boys, particularly young ones, enhanced such de-gendering.

Figure 2.1: 'Home Comforts' [n.d.], the frontispiece of Sarah Ellis,
The Women of England (1843)

Boys' fashion: Lace and tweed, kilts and knickerbockers, androgyny and effeminacy

Victorian fashion required parents to dress their sons and daughters in such a similar manner it becomes hard to recognise gender differences – although, as we will see, sources disagreed as to the age boys should be dressed into masculinity. Some sources indicate that between the 1820s and 1850s, boys donned the tunic and trouser outfit only when they were about five, and according to Alsion Gernsheim, in the 1840s, until the age of six, boys wore 'a frock like a girl's' and differed from their sisters only 'by their shorter hair'.[16] Once boys turned six or seven, they discarded the tunic and 'wore long checked trousers like their fathers', short dark jacket, light waistcoat, and sometimes a military looking peaked cap', and after the age of 14 their attire was even more similar to that of adult men, including the 'top hat'.[17] Other sources suggest that already by mid-century, breeching occurred by the age of four; certainly, by the end of the century, the breeching-age had become common at approximately three.[18] Certainly, as the years went by, the perception that boys needed to be prepared for the adult world of corruption (while women to be kept pure to decontaminate men if need be), the body of the boy theoretically required de-androgenisation and masculinisation. An early discursive example of the body of the boy symbolically beginning the process of turning into a man and leaving the feminised domestic space at a young age, is that of young Tom Brown in Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, published in 1857 but set in the 1830s. Tom exchanges frock for breeches 'at the age of four', to break out of feminised domesticity in the form of 'the yoke and authority of his nurse', and having 'two new shillings in his breeches-pockets'.[19]

However, we also witness the perpetuation of sartorial similarity between girls and young boys in the mid-century if we compare two illustrations from the same issue of *The Illustrated London News*, published in 1853 (Figures 2.2 and 2.3).[20]

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[16] Alison Gernsheim, *Victorian & Edwardian Fashion: A Photographic Survey* (1963; New York: Dover, 1981), p. 31. Hereafter referred to as *Victorian & Edwardian Fashion* in footnotes.
[17] Gernsheim, *Victorian & Edwardian Fashion*, p. 31.
[18] Callahan and Paoletti, 'Is it a Girl or a Boy?', p. 193.
[19] Thomas Hughes, *Tom Brown's Schooldays,* digitised edition (1857; London: MacMillan, 1868), pp. 20, 29.
[20] 'Paris Fashions for December', in *The Illustrated London News* (1853), *NYPL Digital Gallery* (*The Picture Collection of the New York Public Library*), Image ID 802739.
<http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?802739>[accessed 12.12.2012].

Figure 2.2: 'Paris Fashions for December', in *The Illustrated London News* (1853)

Figure 2.3: 'Paris Fashions for December', in *The Illustrated London News* (1853)

Unfortunately, the caption to this illustration does not mention how old the children are, but based on other illustrations from this weekly newspaper that do mention age, we can assume they are between seven and ten. As we see, the depicted boy does not differ all that much from the girl from the waist down. Both wear a skirt and pantaloons or pantalettes. In the case of the girl, and recalling the critique expressed against this dress item, we see that fashion persisted in rejecting the imposition of gender boundaries for young ages – thus allowing her to experience some of the liberties her brothers enjoyed. The feminising tone in the textual description of the boy's attire suggests further gender-resistance: 'black velvet embroidered [...] in front and in the sleeves. Trousers ornamented with English open embroidery-work'.[21] This androgynous boy, in his luxurious and soft attire, overall gives the impression of a pure and noble character, (yet) unaffected by adult (male) corruption. Through this sartorial construction, this feminised boy most probably suggested moral betterment to his adult contemporaries.

Furthermore, this earlier masculinisation once the toddler-stage was left behind should not be understood in absolute terms. A wide range of sartorial representations indicates that gender-polarisation did not reach all boys of all ages so smoothly, instead reflecting an increasingly complex rhetoric regarding gender. Sensual pleasure in feminising a boy by wrapping him up in luxurious material may have been limited to very young ages towards the end of the century and by class, given costs and practicalities, but it still existed and indicates parental refusal to accept gendering. Take, for instance, the description of how to dress a three-year old boy, published in 1882 in *Myra's Mid-Monthly Journal*:

> dress [...] of crimson satin and cream lace; the skirt is lightly gathered over an embroidered satin band worked in black silk, the casaque being crenelated over it, each tab embroidered with a flower in black silk, and a black satin scarf is tied loosely round the hips [...] a full flounce of cream lace, and a very large handsome collar and cuffs of lace.[22]

Granted, the boy is only three, but since by four, he should begin this masculinisation-process, such sartorial delight seems to border on excess. Furthermore, even if such gendering-refusal were limited to very young ages and breeching allowed

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[21] 'Paris Fashions for December', in *The Illustrated London News*.
[22] Rose, *Boys' Clothes*, p. 1, referring to *Myra's Mid-Monthly Journal* (September 1882), p. 256.

parents to grant their sons access into the masculinised sphere, other fashion trends further complicated this gendering process. For instance, there were the kilts that offered parents the chance to keep their sons in a state of gender-indeterminacy, despite social expectations – or rather, obeying social expectations with a certain twist. Kilts had been available as early as 1850, but it was in 1877 that *Tailor and Cutter* pronounced them as 'a new style of juvenile dress' serving as a 'transitional garment between the dresses worn by unbreeched boys and suits with jackets and shorts'.[23] According to Richard Taylor in *The Boy and How to Suit Him* (1899), when a boy is between four and six, and the 'mother has arrived at the conclusion that her offspring must be "breeched"', she has the choice between the sailor suit, which is the 'regulation style', the kilt or 'the full-length trouser [that] takes the place of the knicker'.[24] And this kilt allowed parents to delay transition to a clear gendering, since it was 'modified in cut, fabric and trim to conform to a fashionable aesthetic based on women's dresses'.[25] For instance, the young boy in a fashion plate from *Queen* in 1875 may be less feminised than the boy in Figure 2.3, but he nonetheless is not masculinised (Figure 2.4).[26]

Yet, more careful engagement with this fashion plate also indicates that instances of delayed sartorial gendering should not immediately be labelled as an attempt to feminise the boy sartorially. He is only a year older than the one whose attire was described so sensually in 1882 in *Myra's Mid-Monthly Journal*, and his attire is by no means comparable to that of the 1882 description. His attire is still girlish, but it is nonetheless less frilly, with less lace and finishing; furthermore, its textual description is realistic and practical:

> Tweed, cloth, or washing material may be used. The kilt-plaited skirt
> is sewn to an under-waistcoat, and the paletot has a pointed collar.
> Pockets at the sides, pointed cuffs ornamented with braid and
> buttons.[27]

[23] Rose, *Boys' Clothes*, pp. 1, 196.

[24] Rose, *Boys' Clothes*, p. 196, referring to Richard Taylor, *The Boy and How to Suit Him!! A Suitable Little Treatise in 5 Chaps* (1899), p. 3.

[25] Rose, *Boys' Clothes*, p. 207.

[26] 'Costume for a Boy from Three to Four', in *Queen*, *NYPL Digital Gallery*, Image ID 804014. <http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?804014>[accessed 11.12.2012].

[27] 'Costume for a Boy from Three to Four', *Queen.*

Figure 2.4: 'Costume for a Boy from Three to Four', in *Queen* (1875)

What also needs to be acknowledged is that the way parents dressed their children – and hence how gender was shaped – should not only be understood within the debates on masculinity and femininity, but also of class. As critics such as Sonya O. Rose argue, gender is in many ways class-specific.[28] Indeed, according to Jane Emily Panton's *The Way They Should Go* (1896), the attraction of the kilt was that they 'are dear to buy, and so can never become really common'.[29] It is interesting that kilts had only limited royal or patriotic associations.[30] Kilts made their first appearance after Queen Victoria began dressing her sons in Highland kilts in the 1840s, but even after the young princes wore kilts to the opening of the Crystal Palace for the Grand Exhibition in 1851, they were still not very popular. In the 1860s and 1870s, the young 'unbreeched' boys wore adaptations of the Highland kilt, but military or aristocratic references were absent, while the kilts of older boys had associations of leisure 'by being sold with expensive velvet or cashmere jackets'.[31] Here, we see how social factors affected the construction of masculine identities, with parents making class and age more significant criteria for dress than gender *per se*.[32]

The introduction of the knickerbocker suit in 1860, furthermore, brought changes to this sartorial gendering process, allowing parents to switch from dress to knickers when boys were about three.[33] For instance, a fashion plate from *Queen* in 1875 depicts an eight-year old boy wearing knickerbockers; to our Twenty-first century eye, his posture and poise might bring to mind some feminisation, owing to the tilt of the head and the downward glance (Figure 2.5). Yet, casting our acquired conceptions aside, we need to acknowledge he also no longer supports himself through a chair, while the verbal description of his attire lacks all the frilly and lacy elements previous witnessed:

> Made of dark tweed, the knickerbockers fit the knee, and the jacket and waistcoat are open at the neck. The Bolin collar is attached to the shirt, and a blue necktie is worn beneath. The jacket is held together by a strap and buttons. Striped stockings.[34]

[28] Sonya O. Rose, *Limited Livelihoods: Gender and Class in Nineteenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 4.

[29] Jane Emily Panton, *The Way They Should Go* (1896), qtd. in Rose, *Boys' Clothes*, p. 181.

[30] Rose, *Boys' Clothes*, p. 207.

[31] Rose, *Boys' Clothes*, p. 208.

[32] Rose, *Boys' Clothes*, p. 182.

[33] Callahan and Paoletti, 'Is it a Girl or a Boy?', p. 194

[34] 'Boy of Eight', in *The Queen*, *NYPL Digital Gallery*, Image ID 804021. <http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?804021>[accessed 11.12.2012].
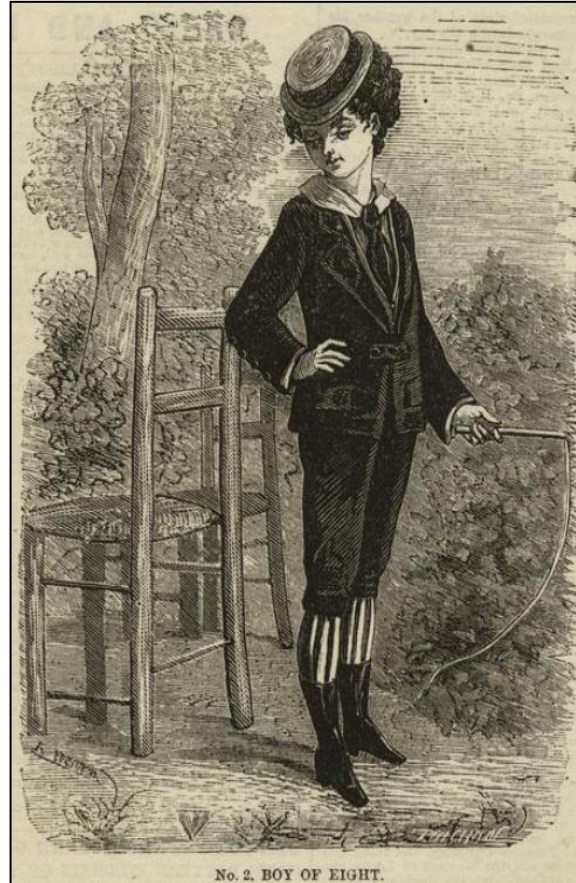
Figure 2.5: 'Boy of Eight', in *Queen* (1875)

It would be tempting to say that the *fin-de-siècle* brought with it a clear-cut masculine construction of boys, but that would also be misleading. There was, for instance, the 'Fauntleroy-craze', the idolisation of the pure child inspired by the character of young and androgynous Cedric Errol in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *Fauntleroy* in 1886, already mentioned in the Introduction (Figure 2.6).[35] This look, modelled on that of Burnett's son Vivian, revived the call for feminised virtues of compassion of the mid-century (Figure 2.7).[36]

Especially following the stage adaptation of *Fauntleroy* in 1888, seven-year-old Cedric's appearance became so fashionable that parents desired to dress their children into the Fauntleroy-look, with a suit with a white lace collar, a sash around the waist, short trousers and knee-high boots.[37] As will be further discussed in Chapter Four, sources indicate that contemporary boys as well as adult men resented this look, but nonetheless, by 1893, variations of this attire were praised in magazines such as *Harper's Bazaar* and *Peterson's Magazine*. A comparison of the original of Vivian's attire with a suit held in the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising (FIDM) Museum, and dating between 1890-1900, shows that in this case real life truly imitated art, resulting in a highly feminised fashion – and contributed to the construction of a hybrid gender identity for boys of the period (Figures 2.7 & 2.8).[38] Aided by the character associations created through the figure of Cedric, this sartorially androgynous figure of the boy was constructed as able to navigate between the feminine and the masculine realms, promoting virtue and humility through his supposedly innate moral and physical strength.

This, of course, does not mean that when parents made their sons wear Fauntleroy-suits they were in any way contemplating a fluid gender identity. Most probably, this craze had, as mentioned before in relation to kilts, more to do with class-consciousness than moral consciousness, given that such attire of velvet and lace allowed parents to display an affluence that permitted the purchase of such materials and to visualise that their boys to not need to make a living through manual work.

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[35] All illustrations from *Fauntleroy* are by Reginald Birch and are taken from Frances Hodgson Burnett, *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, digitised edn. (1886; New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1889).
[36] Image of Vivian Burnett found at '100 Years of the Secret Garden', *News at Nine*. <http://multimediaart.at/~fhs33471/zeitung/article1.html> [accessed 15.3.2014].
[37] For more on Cedric's appearance, the so-called Fauntleroy-craze and contemporary reactions, see for instance John Nicholas Beffel, 'The Fauntleroy Plague', *The Bookman*, 65.2 (April 1927), pp.133-137. <http://www.unz.org/Pub/Bookman-1927apr-00133> [accessed 23.7.2014]; Wilson, 'Little Lord Fauntleroy: The Darling of Mothers and the Abomination of a Generation', pp. 253-54.
[38] 'Little Lord Fauntleroy', *FIDM. Museums and Galleries*. <http://blog.fidmmuseum.org/museum/2009/09/little-lord-fauntleroy.html> [accessed 4.12.2012].

Figure 2.6: Illustration by Reginald Birch, in Frances Hodgson
Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1887)

Figure 2.7: Photo of Vivian Burnett, '100 Years
of the Secret Garden'

Overall, we see a clearly gendered identity was constructed for boys as the Victorian era ended, visible in contemporary popular culture and commercially directed advertising. There are, for instance, two cartoons in *Punch*, one from the year 1894 and one from 1890, which both construct the depicted boys as masculine, regardless of class (Figures 2. and 2.9).[39] Obviously, *Punch* cartoons are just *cartoons*, imaginative representations – but as part of contemporary print culture, they contain encoded meanings that the audience was expected to decode, reflecting (and shaping) public perceptions.

Comparing the two illustrations, we first notice that the boys probably belong to different classes. The one receiving drawing instructions might belong to a higher class, while the 'vulgar' boys on the street possibly to a lower class. Second, comparing the boys in Figure 2.9, we see that the two boys probably also belong to different classes given their attire (as well as posture and hand gesture), with the boy in the middle probably of a higher class than the boy leaning against the wall. Yet, none of them are reminiscent of Cedric and his frilly raiment: in both cartoons, they wear adult fashion, with long trousers; the material of their attire appears to be 'sensible'; their hair has a simple and straight cut. Indeed, by the end of the century, even younger boys were for the most part no longer sartorially de-gendered (or at least, it was no longer the fashionable thing to do), as can be seen in an advertisement published in *The Illustrated London News* in 1898 (Figure 2.10).[40]

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[39] 'Friendly Advice, *Punch* (6.4.1889), by George Du Maurier; retrieved from *The Victorian Web*, Section 'Punch' and 'The Art World'.
<http://www.victorianweb.org/periodicals/punch/art/11.html>[accessed 19.12.2012]; Very Vulgar Boy', *Punch* (15.12.184), by W. J. Hodgson.
[40] 'Advertisement for boys' suits', *The Illustrated London News*, England (1898), *NYPL Digital Gallery*, Image ID 816013.
<http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?816013>[accessed 11.12.2012].

Figure 2.8: 'Friendly Advice, in *Punch* (6.4.1889), by George Du Maurier
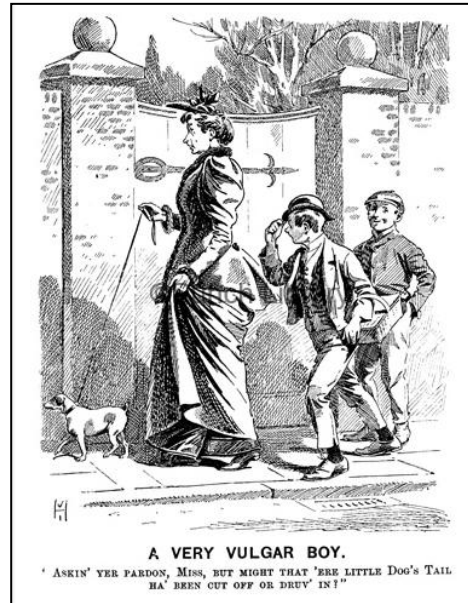
Figure 2.9: 'Very Vulgar Boy', in *Punch* (15.12.1894), by W. J. Hodgson

Figure 2.10: 'Advertisement for boys' suits', in *The Illustrated London News*, England (1898)

In this advertisement, the boys are depicted in very different attire, regardless of their age, from the previous decades. The three boys in the middle model clothes for boys between the ages of three to 11, and we see their constructions create associations beyond domestic space, as does the boy in the centre, who evokes the image of outside play owing to his straw-hat. Even though this boy still displays traces of Fauntleroy-tendencies with his knickerbockers and lace collar, the image is more masculine, at least to our modern perceptions. Older boys are even more masculinised. The boy to the far-right, aged 9-16, is wearing a 'Rink suit', and with his walking stick and bowler hat appears quite the young businessman. The far-left boy, also 9-16, seems more fancily dressed, but this difference could be explained by the fact that he is wearing an 'Eton suit'; a suit that suggests membership to a higher class and thus the ability to get an expensive education instead of working for a living (and requiring practical attire). Even the boy in the 'Suffolk suit' (second from the right), aged 7-12 and still in knickerbockers, suggests rather a soldier than a young boy, owing to the item he carries upon his shoulder that is reminiscent of a gun and the bag he has cross-hanging around his waist.

Advertisements do not necessarily reflect what people wear in real life, but they do serve as indication of what people were encouraged to buy. They hence indicate public perceptions of what identity one should present through clothing. Such advertisements as the one in Figure 2.10 imply that despite the Fauntleroy-fashion, what we now read as masculine attributes were taking shape in boys' fashions. This masculinity might rarely have had military associations, since 'the symbolic language of masculinity in nineteenth-century boys clothing was largely unarticulated' – but if one compares for instance the young boy in Figure 2.3 with the boys in Figure 2.10, it becomes clear that fashion increasingly championed a less androgynous appearance.[41] So, let us now explore how fashion for girls and women contributed to the construction of femininity.

Girls' fashion: Restrictive corsets, liberating sportswear and rational dress

Undoubtedly, the female body was similarly, if not more, employed in the sartorial commentary that accompanied social debates regarding gender and class identity. The construction of femininity, with certain variations according to class, was more absolute

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[41] Rose, *Boys' Clothes*, p. 207.

than that of masculinity – and it involved the perpetuation of a very restricted but also sexualised gender, even after changes in medical science and socio-political perceptions paved the way for a more liberated sartorial and gender identity. However, before we look at fashion for girls, we need to understand how the intersection of discourses on class and femininity influenced women's fashion. One reason for restrictive fashion was probably that dress at the time had, at least for higher-class women, to a much larger extent than today, significant moral and social implications, expressing reputation and hence, social identity. It would of course be arrogant to assume that women belonging to lower and working classes did not care about reputation and appearance, but in their case, issues of practicality and money were also a factor. Certainly, as today, the ideal woman was supposed to be beautiful, and as today, ideal beauty was a construction of its time, involving a variety of social factors. Admittedly, beauty was not all about fashion. Part of that so-called beauty and attraction for women, and girls, especially of the upper- and middle classes, was to be or become, a good companion to her husband and a good hostess; this involved being aware of current affairs but also learning modern languages, music, drawing and dance. However, reflecting women's association with domestic spaces, some commentators contended that intellectual education was incompatible with beauty, even endangering or compromising her; at times, the claim was heard that education should consist only of being educated about beauty.[42] Take, for instance, advice offered in 1837 by Alexander Walker that 'immoderate development of the intellectual facilities, cannot exist without, in some respect, encroaching upon beauty and the graces'.[43]

Within such rhetoric, the female body served as the visual expression of social identity, with the waist functioning as marker of class-identity. Despite reforms, the ideal female figure between the 1830s and (as late as) the 1880s demanded a slender waist and for that, a corset or some form of tight lacing was necessary. The corset, however, contained deeper meanings. It served to conceal any 'coarse' flesh and mould the waist into a small form that was supposedly associated with gentility; on the other hand, an un-corseted body denoted the need for mobility to engage in physical labour and thus suggested non-upper class membership.[44] Such perceptions resulted in the construction of a highly sexualised female gender where both undergarments and gowns drew attention to the female figure (while paradoxically also celebrating female nature

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[42] Silver, *Victorian Literature*, pp. 28-41.

[43] Mrs. Alexander Walker, *Female Beauty, as Preserved and Improved by Regimen, Cleanliness, and Dress* (London: Thomas Hurst, 1837), pp. 149-50, in Silver, *Victorian Literature*, p. 29.

[44] Silver, *Victorian Literature*, pp. 28-41; Leigh Summers, *Bound to Please: A History of the Victorian Corset* (2001; Guildford: Berg, 2003), pp. 9-10. Hereafter referred to in the footnotes as *Bound to Please*.

that had no sexual desires). Of course, there were those who protested against this feminised body. For instance, in 1851, the American Amanda Bloomer (1818-94) proposed wearing a shortened skirt and trousers for practical reasons and writers in health journals, such as *Water Cure Journal*, promoted trousers for health reasons with some, such as Rachel Brook Gleason, deploring the ailments arising from the 'semi-suicidal' attire of petticoats, bustles and corsets.[45] Trousers were taken up by the Rational Dress Movement, which emphasised the need for healthy attire.

A look at literature of the period shows that writers contributed to the criticism of the corset and the construction of feminine identity. Take Charlotte Mary Yonge's (1823-1901) *The Daisy Chain* (1856) and its sequel, *The Trial* (1864), a so-called family chronicle describing the adventures of the 11 May children and their father, a doctor, following the sudden death of their mother, and ranging from idealised acts of love and charity to painful instances of injustice and loss. In these novels, fashionable dress emerges as entrapping women in an unnatural and tortuous life. For instance, Flora May brings with her from Paris for her tomboyish sister Ethel silk dresses, 'glistening with the French air of freshness and grace', and much more beautiful than Ethel's 'white muslin' – but to wear them, Ethel must don an 'instrument of torture, a half made body'.[46] Later in the narration, Mary May argues that 'one can move so much more quietly without crinoline' before she 'unfastened' the 'hooks' of Averil Ward's 'tight heavy dress'; the narrator adds sarcastically that 'a mountain of mohair and scarlet petticoat remained on the floor, upborne by an over-grown steel mouse-trap'.[47]

However, especially among the upper and middle classes, such criticism of restrictive fashion was ridiculed by many, with fears expressed that the tenets governing the constructed norms of masculinity and femininity would be undermined (though of course, since the voices of the working and lower classes were rarely heard, one cannot assume that they did not share this opinion). Such fears shaped public discourse, with trousers being constructed as visualisers of lower-class membership or an unrefined identity – or both, given that lower- or working-class woman were commonly (and unfairly) considered less virtuous. Take, for instance, the reaction of the American *The International Monthly* to the promotion of the 'Bloomer costume' in London by an American woman. The writer claims the woman is 'probably a cheap dress maker', since in America, such dress was worn only by 'the persons of an abandoned class' or

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[45] Cunningham, *Reforming Women's Fashion, 1850-1920*, pp.40-51.
[46] Charlotte M. Yonge, *Daisy Chain*, vol. 2, digitised edition (1865; New York: D. Appleton and Company 1869), pp. 76-77.
[47] Charlotte M. Yonge, *The Trial: More Links of the Daisy Chain*, digitised edition (1865; New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1867), p. 24.

by 'vulgar women whose inordinate love of notoriety is apt to display itself in ways that induce their exclusion from respectable society'.[48] In England, women who wore trousers were derogatorily described as 'mannish women' and ridiculed in magazines such as *Punch*.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, mothers strove to educate their daughters in the semiotics of dress from an early age – and thus, the girl's body did not escape the inscription of such constrictive social commentary through sartorial expectations.[49] Given that girlhood as a separate sphere of existence was barely present yet, girls over seven or eight, especially of the upper and middle classes, dressed more or less like their mothers, only distinguished by wearing shorter frocks and pantaloons.[50] Girls of the lower and working classes had, like their mothers, to make do with clothes that allowed them to engage in physical activities and mended clothes handed down to them (though of course the latter meant they ultimately shared the fashions of the upper and middle classes).[51] Furthermore, with the slender waist serving to signal class membership, corset wearing was also imposed upon girls, especially of the middle and upper classes. Sources indicate that the juvenile corset, worn as undergarment, made its first appearance around 1840 and reached the heights of popularity between 1860 and 1880 – and this despite the fact that physical discomfort was acknowledged.[52] A source from 1840 describes a girl 'afflicted with a pair of stays with bones which cause[d] indefinite trouble and dismay to the whole household', wearing a gown with 'a most wax like fit and when she appear[ed] in said gown she look[ed] most awfully tall'.[53] A nineteenth-century corset-advertisement advised girls to 'lie face down on the floor in order that [their mothers] might then place a foot in the small of the back to obtain the necessary purchase on the laces'.[54] Fashionable boarding schools were expected to require girls to have slim waists, and as a physician in 1859 describes in 'Torture in the Nineteenth Century: Fashion in Tight Lacing', girls in a fashionable school 'are compelled to wear

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[48] *The International Monthly*, 4.4, November 1, 1851, p. 564.
<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/37904/37904-h/37904-h.htm> [accessed 13.6.2013].
[49] Silver, *Victorian Literature*, pp. 55-56.
[50] Gernsheim, Victorian & Edwardian Fashion, p. 31
[51] For a discussion of 'girlhood', see Mitchell, The New Girl.
[52] Summers, *Bound to Please*, pp. 63-64.
[53] Summers, *Bound to Please*, referring to Cecilia Ridley, p. 64.
[54] Silver, *Victorian Literature*, p. 36, referring to George Drinka, *The Birth of Neurosis: Myth, Malady, and the Victorians* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), p. 39.

stays night and day'.[55] On the other hand, less-renowned schools were characterised as allowing girls to 'run as nearly wild as could be', not unlike rural women.[56]

Class was indeed an important determinant of appearance, and thus femininity, as becomes apparent in the illustration published in *Punch* in 1851 (Figure 2.11).[57] We see parents and their children enjoying their leisure time during the Great Exhibition, a space where different social strata could meet. There seems to be no hostility or anxiety surrounding the meeting, just a chasm enhanced through the different clothes the individuals wear. The young girl on the right, through her clothes, is not only highly feminised but also bestowed with an upper-class identity that separates her from the girl on the left, who is sartorially given a less feminised, lower-class identity. The upper-class girl is wearing a full skirt that emphasises her waist, and pointy shoes, while the lower-class girl is wearing sturdy boots and a coat over her dress, so that her waist is not visible. Recalling the construction of bloomers as marker of an unrefined or non-upper class identity, we see the paradox: the more shapeless attire marks the supposedly morally loose lower- or working-class girl, while the middle- and upper-class female body, supposedly pure and innocent, is visibly more enticing.

This illustration is just one example of how upper-class femininity was constructed as different from lower-class femininity in the public arena of the mid-nineteenth century, and how the body of the girl did not escape sartorial inscription in this construction. Imitation of the adult female figure, and insistence on a slim waist as a fashion-must for girls of the upper- and middle classes continued in the following years, as the fashion plate 'The Newest Fashions for August', in 1856 indicates (Figure 2.12).[58] The depiction of the little girl among women emphasises her present and future place in society, as does her attire that mirrors that of the adult females. Although the girl's pantalettes suggest some gender fluidity, such represented transgressions are limited to girls of young ages.

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[55] Silver, *Victorian Literature*, p. 41, referring to 'Torture in the Nineteenth Century: Fashion in Tight Lacing', in *Ladies' Treasury* 6 (1864), II.

[56] Silver, *Victorian Literature*, p. 41, referring to William Barry Lord, *The Corset and the Crinoline* (London: Ward, Lock, and Tyler, 1868), p. 157.

[57] 'The Pound and the Shilling', *Punch* (5.7.1851), reproduced in *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination, eds.* Carol T. Christ and John O. Jordan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). <http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft296nb16b/ > [accessed 19.12.2012].

[58] 'The Newest Fashion for August 1856' (1865). *NYPL Digital Gallery*, Image ID 802759 <http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?802759> [accessed 11.12.2012].

Figure 2.11: 'The Pound and the Shilling', in *Punch* (5.7.1851)

Figure 2.12: 'The Newest Fashions for August 1856' (1856)

Contemporary visual representations indicate that fashion tenets continued to require girls to resemble their mother in the following decades – and thus also continued to mark and shape class identity. For instance, during the bustle-period of 1860 to 1890, girls of upper and middle classes who did not need to worry about how cumbersome dresses would restrict movement, frequently donned dresses that closely resembled women's fashion once they turned ten, with 'fitted bodices and skirts draped over small bustles'; even when they did not have bustles, they had 'puffs and panniers that pulled their dresses into a larger gather at their lower back', wearing heavily ornamented and frilly' attire.[59] Three different fashion plates from *Queen*, two from 1869 and one from 1875, reveal how fashionableness for a girl continued to imply heavy dresses and dresses with bustles (Figures 2.13-2.15).[60] One difference, however, is that these girls are now outside feminised domestic space and unsupervised by some adult (female) figure – for the outside was the space of either the women of non-upper or working classes or, paradoxically, those of the upper-classes whose class-membership for some reason was constructed as unaffected by what they did.[61] Still, this setting appears to be more a stylistic device than anything else, given the girls' attire – for as we will see shortly, it was after the 1880s that fashion truly encouraged outside activities.

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[59] Callahan and Paoletti, 'Is it a Girl or a Boy?', p. 195; Joel Shrock, *The Gilded Age* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2004), p. 95. Shrock describes American fashion, but mentions these were 'the styles and trends coming from Europe'. Leigh Summers also mentions that the 'juvenile corset' was popular in both 'England and America between 1860 and 1900', p. 63.

[60] 'Toilettes for Girls from Twelve to Fourteen. No. 3 Girl's Costume', *The Queen* (1869), *NYPL Digital Gallery*, Image ID 803463.
<http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?803463> [accessed 11.12.2012]; 'Costume for a Girl of Ten', *The Queen* (1875), *NYPL Digital Gallery*, Image ID 804033.
<http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?804033> [accessed 11.12.2012]; 'Toilettes for Girls from Ten to Twelve', *Queen* (1865), *NYPL Digital Gallery* (*The Picture Collection of the New York Public Library*), Image ID 803431.
<http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?803431> [accessed 11.12.2012].

[61] Mitchell, *New Girl*, pp. 106-07.

Figure 2.13: 'Toilettes for Girls from Twelve to Fourteen. No.3 Girl's Costume', in *The Queen* (1869)

Figure 2.14: 'Toilettes for Girls from Ten to Twelve', in *The Queen* (1869)

Figure 2.15: 'Costume for a Girl of Ten', in *The Queen* (1875)

In Figures 2.13 and 2.14, attention is drawn to the girls' back through posture. Both girls wear almost adult fashion, with full skirts setting off slender waists and most likely making excursion outside domestic space (as depicted) less pleasurable, and probably also less desirable. The ten-year-old girl of 1875 is obviously not enjoying the sartorial freedom we today associate with such a young age, dressed in a close-fitting jacket and a skirt where the back is ruffled, or, as the advertisement says, 'draped very high at the back with a brown silk sash with fringed ends' that makes her backside protrude (Figure 2.14). Initially, it seems that the earlier toilette is slightly less restrictive, even if the same slenderness of waist and gathering of material in the back is promoted – especially if one considers that the dress is recommended for an older girl (Figure 2.13). However, we would be mistaken to believe that fashion for girls was more liberal in the 1860s: in 1869, we see restrictive and very adult-like fashions for younger ages, with heavy and multi-layered attire that once again constricts the waist (Figure 2.15). [62] We need to remember that corsets were still used – even if they were supposedly more liberating; take, for instance, the so-called corset tournure advertised in American *Harper's Magazine* in 1859 (Figure 2.16).[63] For us, as twenty-first century readers, the visual and accompanying textual depiction probably evokes an instrument of torture, but it seems that, at the time, it was perceived as a liberating dress item:

> The corset tournure is a novelty which is highly recommended. While serving the purpose indicated by its name, it forms an effectual support for the skirts. We also illustrate a skirt supporter, the extreme lightness and simplicity of which commends it to public favor. It consists of a girdle of three parallel slips of watch-spring steel, furnished with a slide so as to be readily adapted to the size of the wearer; this, instead of the person of the wearer, receives the pressure of the girding; small protuberances projecting from the girdle serve as points of supports for the skirts.

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[62] 'Toilettes for Girls from Ten to Twelve', *Queen* (1865), *NYPL Digital Gallery*, Image ID 803431. <http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?803431 [accessed 11.12.2012].
[63] 'Corset Tournure', *Harper's Magazine* (1859), *NYPL Digital Gallery*, Image ID 828225. <http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?828225 [accessed 19.12.2012].

Figure 2.16: 'Corset Tournure', in *Harpers Magazine* (1859)

Socio-sexual perceptions gradually changed – and as we will see, just as the emergence of more liberating Aesthetic and Rational Dress trends in the 1880s appeared as an alternative to the highly feminising fashions for women, so fashion for young girls also oscillated between the more sensible and the highly feminised.[64] First, corsets continued to be used and the print media continued to advertise juvenile corsets for children and young girls – albeit supposedly more healthy versions. For instance, 'for children and young girls up to fourteen', the fashion consultant for *Woman* magazine at one time 'recommended the National corset bodice' and at another the 'Rational Corset Bodice', with the latter being designed to fit a child aged two and promoted as 'far superior to the ordinary, hard stiff corset' since it was more pliable.[65] Yet, *The Girl's Own Paper*, in spring 1882, contends that '[t]he real dress reforms that are needed are the entire abolition of tightlacing, the adoption of better underclothing by everybody'.[66] Another article in the same magazine, a few months later, evinces that the corset tournure had by no means disappeared and was still perceived as liberating:

> short skirts [that] are wider, and though equally tight in the front, the advent of the tournure has made the sides and hack much wider and more graceful for slight figures, because not so tight and clinging.[67]

However, while fashion available to girls did not necessarily challenge gender constructions, it did gradually reflect health concerns and the gradually increasing liberties women, at least those of the upper- and middle-classes, could enjoy. Principles of health and hygiene were being defined, and restrictive clothes worn by women of the upper classes were increasingly associated with a weak body and an inactive life.[68] For instance, in 1882 Richmond Leigh recommended the Rational Dress Association in a letter to *Knowledge*, 'to combat the stupid vagaries of fashion, to show how to dress rationally, to restore the pristine beauty of the human figure'.[69] It is interesting that the figure of the child was involved in this dress reform. In the 1880s, individuals such as

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[64] Nelson, *Boys Will Be Girls*, pp. 47-79.
[65] Summers, *Bound to Please,* p. 65.
[66] Lady Dressmaker, 'Seasonable Clothing, and How It Should Be Made', *The Girls Own Paper* (Spring 1882). <http://www.bustles-and-bows.co.uk/1882-3/GirlsOwn3.htm> [accessed 6.12.2012].
[67] Lady Dressmaker, 'New Clothing, and How It Should Be Made', *The Girls Own Paper* (Winter 1882). <http://www.bustles-and-bows.co.uk/1882-1/GirlsOwn1.htm> [accessed 6.12.2012].
[68] Cunningham, *Reforming Women's Fashion, 1850-1920*, pp. 55, 187; P. Mactaggart and R. A. Mactaggert, 'Some Aspect of the Use of Non-Fashionable Stays', in *Strata of Society* (London: Costume Society, 1974), pp. 20-28 (pp. 20-21); Helene E. Roberts, 'The Exquisite Slave: The Role of Clothes in the Making of the Victorian Woman', *Signs* (Winter 1977), pp. 570-79.
[69] Richmond Leigh, 'Corset Wearing' (letter), *Knowledge* (November 10, 1882), 393, in Cunningham, *Reforming Women's Fashion, 1850-1920*, p. 93.

Ada S. Ballin, lecturer to the National Health Society, stressed that dress reform would have to start with children since 'the customs and habits of adults are formed', with the 'grown-up woman of to-day has been broken in from childhood to wear the ordinary garments and submit to the fashion of the time'.[70]

Indeed, girls' dresses become shorter approximately after the 1870s, and in the 1880s, the kilted skirt made its entrance. An illustration from *The Girl's Own Paper* contains some suggestion that, at least for younger girls of the upper-and middle classes, fashion was becoming less constrictive (Figure 2.17).[71] The girl no longer is a mirror-image of the adult women through her attire: her coat is only knee-length and emphasises neither slender waist nor puffed rear. Again, we see her in female company and within the feminised interior, but interestingly, she is no longer in the midst of the women, but at the margins, while her coat and bonnet suggest she will not remain for long in this closed space but head outside, possibly to play.

Contemporary literature echoes such trends, as, for example, Juliana Horatia Ewing's (1841-85) *Six to Sixteen* (1875), a schoolgirl autobiography of shallow Margery Vandaleur, who moves from India to England after being orphaned at the age of six. Margery's desire to grow up so as to be able to wear costumes such as other ladies do while going shopping is presented as 'ludicrously out of place' and quite unhygienic, since such costumes involve 'something tight-fitting [...] with a good deal of lace about it' and 'a very large crinoline, and a very long dress of pale silk, which floated after her along the dirty pavement' but that 'would not wash and would undoubtedly be worn again'.[72] The dress critique, in fact, is similar to the one expressed in previously cited examples from Yonge's stories, but now we also witness the removal of women from feminised domestic space, even if only to go shopping.

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[70] Ada S. Ballin, *The Science of Dress in Theory and Practice*, digitised edition ([n.p.]: Dodo Press, 1885), p. 6.
[71] Lady Dressmaker, 'New Clothing, and How It Should Be Made'.
[72] Juliana Horatia Ewing, *Six to Sixteen*, digitised edn. (1875; USA: Dodo Press, [n.d]), p. 60.

Figure 2.17: 'New Clothing, and How It Should Be Made', in *The Girl's Own Paper* (Winter 1882)

Indeed, as the century came to an end, girls increasingly engaged in outdoor, and less feminised, physical activities – and as fashion adapted, it shaped (and in turn was shaped by) gender constructions. On the one hand, growing medical awareness encouraged physical exercise for women, such as cycling and playing hockey, complicating of course the outdoor-aspect previously discussed.[73] On the other, the so-called New Woman emerged, who as Christine Bayles Kortsch contends, was more a 'social phenomenon than actual historical figure', employed to engage with issues ranging from 'women's suffrage, higher education, property rights […] vivisection' to 'socialism and anarchism' as well as 'sexuality, maternity, and domesticity.[74] The term was coined in 1894 in a pair of articles by Ouida and Sarah Grand, who rejected the conventional image of Coventry Patmore's 'Angel of the House'; this 'New Woman' was the discursive representation of women who believed in suffrage, were educated and interested in socio-political issues, were athletic, and proudly supported themselves by working in department stores or offices.[75] And these working middle-class women sported, toward the end of 1880, the so-called tailored suit, consisting of a costume with a bodice resembling a man's shirt, with a high collar, ankle-length skirt and jackets. This suit might have been more practical, but as a cartoon from *Punch* in 1888 indicates, ironically referring to female figure who is wearing such attire as 'Venus', it was also considered less feminine (Figure 2.18).[76]

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[73] Mitchell, *New Girl*, pp. 106-07.
[74] Kortsch, *Dress Culture*, pp. 14-15.
[75] For more on changing perceptions of employment and college-education for women, see Mitchell, *New Girl*, pp. 23-73.
[76] 'The Modern Venus Attired by the Three DisGraces', *Punch* (June 16, 1888), in Kortsch, *Dress Culture*, p. 129.

Figure 2.18: 'The Modern Venus Attired by the Three DisGraces', in *Punch* (June 16, 1888)
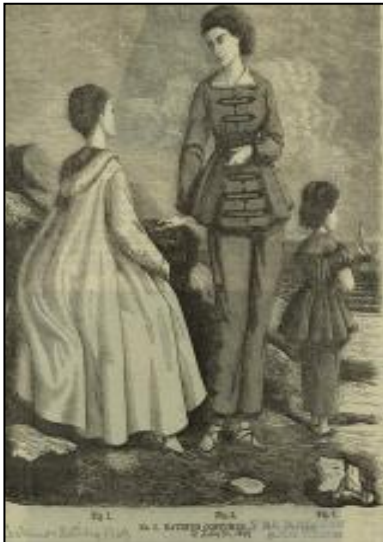
Figure 2.19: 'No. 5 Bathing Costumes', in *The Queen* (1869)

Figure 2.20: 'No. 4. Bathing Costume for Girl of Twelve', in *The Queen* (1883)

Despite such ridicule, the increasing outdoor presence of women and girls meant that public concern shifted from dress worn in the private sphere of the home to dress (and the necessary undergarments for that dress) worn in the public sphere.[77] These changed sartorial constructions and the shift to the public sphere can be seen if one compares two illustrations of bathing suits, published 14 years apart (Figures 2.19 and 2.20).[78]

In the illustration from 1869, the three female figures are almost static, confirming traditional stereotypes of women as being more suited to indoor and inactive pursuits (Figure 2.19). The woman on the left, fully dressed and sitting down, is apparently not about to do any swimming; the girl on the right is wearing a bathing costume, but is only looking at the sea; and the young woman in the middle (of indeterminate age), wearing a similar costume to that of the little girl, has turned her back to the sea and is talking to the sitting woman, as if not interested in the sea. Indeed, the visit to the beach seems an opportunity for discussion and contemplation rather than for physical activity. In contrast, the girl in 1883 depicted in Figure 2.20, with loose hair and trousers that expose her calves may be alone, but since she holds a racket in her hands, we can assume the presence of someone else, but now in the form of a playmate rather than someone to talk to.

As the years went by, we can find a wide range of representations of young girls in less confining attire, external locations, physical engagement and, just like boys, possession of walking sticks or other items that signal activity. Let us look at two fashion plates from the *Young Ladies Journal* in 1891 (Figures 2.21 and 2.22).[79]

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[77] Cunningham, *Reforming Women's Fashion*, pp. 10-11.

[78] 'No. 5 Bathing Costumes' in *Queen*, *NYPL Digital Gallery*, Image ID 817644. <http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?817644> [accessed 17.12.2012]; 'No. 4. Bathing Costume for Girl of Twelve', in *Queen*, *NYPL Digital Gallery*, Image ID 817664. <http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?817664> [accessed 17.12.2012].

[79] 'Girl and Boy at a Beach and Another Girl Walking', *Young Ladies' Journal* (1891), in *Queen*, *NYPL Digital Gallery*, Image ID 815839. <http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?815839> [accessed 17.12.2012]; 'Girls Wearing Hats Outdoors', *Young Ladies' Journal* (1891), in *Queen*, *NYPL Digital Gallery*, Image ID 815841. <http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?815841>[accessed 17.12.2012].

Figure 2.21: 'Girl and Boy at a Beach and Another Girl Walking', in *Young Ladies' Journal* (1891)

Figure 2.22: 'Girls Wearing Hats Outdoors', in *Young Ladies' Journal* (1891)

In Figure 2.21, boy and girl are at the beach, and though they are wearing gender-appropriate attire, we see these two children have almost equal opportunities when it comes to their leisure time. In Figure 2.22, the girl is dressed slightly more formally, but again, she is depicted in external space, holding a walking stick, with skirt only knee-length and a quite simple jacket. Certainly, these girls' gender identity, as constructed through their dress, is by no means the same as that of the girls in 1869 or 1875 (Figures 2.13-2.15). Clothes express a freer childhood, identifying gender but no longer imposing (or at least to a lesser extent) gender restrictions. The girls in Figure 2.22 are dressed in more restrictive attire than that of the children at the beach. Still, even the older girl, who is wearing a longer skirt, is no longer reminiscent of these 1869-1875 girls, confined inside their wide skirts and bustles, petticoats and corsets, whose inability to venture far beyond domestic sphere because of gender restrictions was visually marked and (physically augmented) through sartorial restrictions. Her dress, suggestive of the New Woman, does not consist of endless layers and is only ankle-length, her waist appears relatively un-constricted, her hat is relatively simple – and her tennis racket visualises that she is physically engaged. These girls, in other words, have been inscribed with a new language of attire, one that created a freer space than yet permitted to adult women.[80]

However, we can also see that just as liberating fashion did not replace feminising fashion for adult women, nor did they do so for girls; in fact, feminisation (and eroticisation) even intensified as the century ended. To understand this almost regressive trend, again we need briefly to consider adult women's fashion. Around 1883, the bustle, which had disappeared when the slender silhouette became fashionable in 1875, returned – and constructed until about 1893 even more exaggerated shapes. The hourglass figure was then replaced by another restrictive fashion that demanded the S-bend corset figure. Introduced by American artist Edward Dana Gibson after Queen Victoria's death in 1901, the so-called Gibson look became popular, particularly among the young women of the upper classes who might not have been interested in the suffrage-movement, but engaged in physical activities, attended college and could work. The Gibson-girl represented emancipated young women, unrestricted by bustles and sartorial restriction. Yet, the S-bend corset, emphasizing bust, hips and posterior, also resulted in a highly feminised and also, as sources indicate, impractical construction owing to 'the high-boned collars, the long swathing skirts, [that] were unbearably hot in

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[80] Mitchell's *New Girl* describes this as the 'appearance of the culture of girlhood' in 1880, with girls existing in a 'provisional free space', p. 3.

summer, and […] dragging in the streets, were dirty'.[81] Despite this discomfort and the criticism of the sartorial feminisation of the young body, many mothers dressed their daughters into such a feminising fashion. One fashion plate from the popular American monthly women's magazine *McCall's Magazine* in 1900, for example, illustrates how fashion discourse contributed to young girls not escaping the feminised inscription of the Gibson-Girl-look. The setting is outside, but the cut of the girl's attire and her figure mirror that of the adult woman (Figure 2.23).[82]

An article from the American fashion magazine *Harper's Bazaar* in 1901 confirms that mothers were expected sartorially to feminise their daughter, even through deception – and, interestingly, how fashion changed the construction of the (upper and middle class) girl's body, requiring now for her to reveal her body:

> If intended for a young girl it [a ball gown] need not of necessity be so elaborate […] but it is essentially full dress, and as such permits of a fanciful design to start with, rich trimming […] Low neck and short sleeves are necessary for a ball gown, and even when a girl's neck is thin she is not supposed to be correctly gowned if she has it and her shoulders covered. If she is very thin there can be folds of lace or soft illusion put around the top of the gown, that will veil the shoulders and hide their defects, and the sleeves may be nearly to the elbow.[83]

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[81] Quoted by Edna Woolman Chase, in *Always in Vogue,* found at *Christine's 20ᵗʰ Century Fashion Page*. <http://www.100megspop3.com/adira/1900s.html> [accessed 15.6.2013].

[82] 'September 1900', McCall's Magazine (1900), *Christine's 20ᵗʰ Century Fashion Page*. <http://www.100megspop3.com/adira/1900s.html> [accessed 15.6.2013]. *McCall's* might be American, but the Gibson-look was, after all, an American conception.

[83] 'Fashions for Ball Gowns', *Harper's Bazaar* (January 26, 1901), at Catherine Bishop, 'Ladies' Evening Dress: Turn of the Century 1899-1905', *Vintage Victorian Fashion History Library and Custom Reproduction Clothing.* <http://www.vintagevictorian.com/costume_1900.html> [accessed 20.6.2013].

Figure 2.23: 'September 1900', in *McCall's Magazine* (1900)

Figure 2.24: 'How a Girl Should Dress', in *The Girl's Own Paper* (1906)

Of course, fashion advice in one magazine does not reflect all public opinion. One article in *The Girl's Own Paper* in 1905, for instance, expresses resistance:

Perhaps in time I shall grow accustomed to and even admire the new tight-fitting bodices trimmed in such a way that the bust is thrown very much forward and the waist very much accentuated, but at the present time they are quite an eyesore to me […] Alarmingly compressed waists, and lungs also, I am afraid, are the noticeable feature of the latest phases of fashion.[84]

Still, the depiction of young girls in bathing suits in the same magazine one year later, especially if compared to that of the girls in 1869 and 1883 (Figures 2.19 and 2.20), indicates that feminisation intensified and exposure continued (Figure 2.24).[85]

The beach-location suggests the girls probably belong to the middle and upper classes. The girls are depicted in positions that emphasise buttocks and bosoms. Their posture, simply standing or bending over, also lacks the energy of the girl of the 1883-fashion plate, and constructs girls as more interested in maintaining an elegant appearance than enjoying her newly-acquired liberties. And while initially it seems that the girls do not expose more of their body, given that they wear large hats and skirts up to their knees with pantalettes, a closer look indicates that in fact, there is more exposure of the naked calves and upper arms. These bathing-suits construct a liberating picture of the girl's body, but they also inscribe it with a highly feminised gender.

However, let us recall that the Gibson-look was not only associated with social issues of increased liberties for women, but also with class membership. As we saw, after all, aspects of class affected fashion and its contribution to constructions of femininity throughout Victorian times. So, should we not consider the gendering of the female body not only in light of anxieties regarding dissolving gender but also class boundaries?

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[84] From *The Girl's Own Paper* (February 1905), *Christine's 20th Century Fashion Page*.
[85] From 'How a Girl Should Dress'. *The Girl's Own Paper* (1906), found at 'Bathing Beauties of 1906 from the *Girl's Own Paper'*, *The Dreamstress*.
<http://thedreamstress.com/2013/03/bathing-beauties-of-1906-from-the-girls-own-paper/> [accessed 15.6.2013].

The child in sailor suit: The middle classes and the others

Indeed, the clothed body of the boy and the girl (albeit safely constructed as male and female) increasingly became a vehicle for engagement with issues of class rather than gender after the 1880s. We witnessed in the previous section the intense gendering of the girl-body of the upper and middle classes and will explore in the remaining part of the chapter similar feminisation of the girl-body of the lower and working classes until the last decade of the nineteenth century. In this section, however, we will discuss sartorial representation of the middle-class child, where inscriptions of class led to an increasing de-emphasis of gender, even to the creation of new (and more fluid) perceptions of gender.

One good example of fashion de-emphasising gender is the popular sailor suit. The sailor suit had made its first appearance in 1846, but the earliest example of a sailor suit worn for leisure dates from 1865.[86] *Punch* depicted boys as wearing sailor suits in 1868; in 1870, a dressmaking magazine published the pattern for a sailor suit for boys and by 1874, sailor suits were considered a favourite style.[87] Yet, this suit lacked masculinizing associations, and girls began wearing skirted sailor suits in the 1870s, both in school and for leisure pursuits; Rose contends that the analysis of pictorial sailor suits and any associated visual references, such as a beach or drawing-room setting, indicates class-subtext instead.[88] Middle-class parents dressed their sons and daughters in sailor suits that were 'free looking, combined with elegance' to express the status that allowed them seaside-holidays and set themselves apart from those individuals who could not afford this luxury.[89] And the velvet sailor suits, worn inside drawing-rooms, became emblematic for parents with upper-and middle-class membership as it visualised disregard of economic pressure to purchase more robust attire.

The illustration 'There and (Not) Back' from *Punch* in 1778 is a perfect example of the social and sartorial changes being played out upon the body of the boy and the girl (Figure 2.25).[90] Admittedly, this illustration seems to be more interested in satirising the dangers the middle-class accepts to engage in contemporary leisure

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[86] Rose, *Boys' Clothes*, pp. 188, 197. Referring to Miles Lambert, *Fashion in Photography 1860-1880*, 74 (London: Batsford, 1991).

[87] Rose, *Boys' Clothes*, pp. 188-89. Referring to a dressmaking pattern sheet in *Young Ladies Journal*, 1870 and to *Tailor and Cutter*, June 1874.

[88] For discussion of attire: Clare Rose, 'The Meanings of the Late Victorian Sailor Suit', *Journal for Maritime Research*, 11.1 (2009), pp. 24-50 (pp. 30, 34, 41); Rose, *Boys' Clothes*, pp. 181-93.

[89] Rose, *Boys' Clothes*, p. 195, quoting from *Tailor and Cutter*, June 1874.

[90] 'There and (Not) Back', *Punch* (14.9.1778), found at *ebay*. <http://www.ebay.ie/itm/7x10-punch-cartoon-1878-THERE-AND-NOT-BACK-train-travel-/160844130509>
[accessed 19.12.2012].

activities than in providing any gender commentary. The setting is a ticket-booth, the booth-window surrounded by a multitude of advertisements for seaside excursions, while the salesclerk is a skeleton, selling tickets to the apparently heedless individuals who disregard the dangers involved in their pursuit of middle-class recreations.

Nonetheless, the depiction of the boy and the girl is extremely interesting. The two are located in the front, almost centre, and what seems to be important to this image is not their gender differences visualised through dress, but their similarities that become markers of this middle-class identity that can offer the same out-of-doors enjoyment to both boys and girls. In this image, both girl and boy wear sailor-style attire, and the only difference is that the girl wears a dress with a bow, while the boy knee-length trousers, common at the period. And despite these similarities, their gender identities are not at issue.

Another, this time racist, cartoon from *Punch* in 1880 further reveals how the body of the child became employed in the social and national debates of the times – and how it was affected by these debates (Figure 2.26).[91] Recalling the illustrations of girl's attire in the 1880s, we realise just how informally this girl at the beach is dressed, with her attire showing, but not emphasizing, her gender. Her dress reaches her calves, as the boy's trousers do; her hat is simple and she is not holding a parasol to shield her skin from the sun, as would be expected from a girl belonging to the upper and middle classes; she is wearing neither shoes nor stockings and her waist seems un-corseted.

This cartoon depicts boy and girls as mere children, pure of sexual innuendo – and their purity adds commentary on national identity. At the beach, this stronghold of the English upper and middle classes, these two are faced with a non-Caucasian individual, until recently the representative of the victims of British slave trade and Imperialism. Yet, this individual is apparently one of them, wearing a fashionable bathing suit. His lack of enjoyment, probably because he feels cold owing to his unfamiliarity with the English weather, does not arouse compassion in the two children, however. They look at him dispassionately, as an object of curiosity, and, just as the illustrator stripped him of his trousers, shirt and jacket, so their reference to him as a cannibal strips him of his dignity and humanity. As these two children become mouthpieces of an adult conversation that condemns the infiltration of marginalised individuals into their leisure-sphere, their bodies are dressed into new, alternative visual representations. The boy's gender identity no longer sways between masculinity and androgyny visualised

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[91] 'People Kill and Cook and Eat Each Other', *Punch* (18.9.1880), by George Du Maurier.

through trousers and kilts, the girl's gender identity no longer depends on contracting, expanding and bending her body into feminised shapes.

However, such de-gendering, in the context of social commentary, did not apply to the non-upper-class child. Until the end of the century, this child increasingly became stripped of clothes and shoes to visualise both the danger it posed to social boundaries and the danger it faced, with particularly the figure of the girl of the working and lower classes being feminised, as we shall see in the remaining parts of the chapter.

Philanthropy, poverty and sartorial transgression

To better understand this feminisation through lack of attire, we need to first focus some more on the children's lack of shoes and stockings in Figure 2.26. This barefootedness potentially also references the depiction of barefootedness (and raggedness) within social debates on poverty and associated crime, employed, for instance, by philanthropist Thomas Barnardo in the 1880s to raise funds for his homes for poor children. Barefootedness and raggedness already expressed working- or lower-class membership, as we can see if we look at John Leech's illustration 'Substance and Shadow', a cartoon that appeared in 1843 in response to a competition to decorate the new Houses of Parliament, taking place at the Palace of Westminster (Figure 2.27).[92] This illustration, depicting a variety of physically- and financially-deprived people staring at portraits of well-to-do upper-class individuals, betrays mid-Victorian beliefs that the working classes could morally profit from exposure to art. Their ragged clothes and lack of shoes visually enhance their class membership and supposed inferiority.

So, what happened during the next four decades that so complicated the representation of discursive children that the children's barefootedness in Figure 2.27 suggests membership to the upper and middle classes?

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[92] Jamie W. Johnson, 'The Changing Representation of the Art Public in "Punch", 1841-1896', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 35.3 (Fall, 2002), pp. 272-94, referring to illustration by John Leech, 'Substance and Shadow', *Punch* (15.7.1843), p. 275.

Figure 2.25: 'There and (Not) Back', in *Punch* (14.9.1878)

Figure 2.26: 'In some countries, those people kill and cook and eat each other', by George Du Maurier, in *Punch* (18.9.1880)

Figure 2.27: 'Substance and Shadow', by John Leech, in *Punch* (15.7.1843)

To understand, let us first contextualise the transforming representations of the dressed or semi-dressed child. The Victorian era was a time of hardship for many, and Victorian discourse abounded with children wandering the streets and believed to lack not only parents but also all relationship to the community.[93] Welfare policies emerged that ultimately disrupted the parent-child relationship. For instance, the New Poor Law of 1834 saw the beginning of policies that resulted in dividing parents from their children within workhouses and creating a form of orphan, lacking parental protection.[94] Gradually, this changed and by the 1870s, philanthropic narratives had turned poor children into helpless victims of parental abandonment, exploited sexually and economically, and thus in need of rescue, potentially from their own, demonised, poor parents.[95] The so-called Arab figure, which Barnardo employed in his philanthropic campaigns, emerged in the 1840s, when Thomas Guthrie, preacher and philanthropist, used colonial rhetoric to describe the poor children of Edinburgh in his pamphlet *First Plea for Ragged Schools* (1847). According to Guthrie, '[t]he Arabs of this city are as wild as those of the desert; one year later, Lord Ashley, Earl of Shaftesbury, stated in a parliamentary speech in1848 that 'City Arabs ... are like tribes of lawless freebooters'.[96] Gradually, the 'street Arab', or the 'waif and stray', was constructed into the abandoned and poor child, living in the margins of society – and considered dangerous because, in its struggle for survival, it might cross social boundaries. According to Monica Flegel, the 'Street Arab' figure carried contradictory meanings: on the one hand, the poor child as a 'savage' threatened social order and expressed national and class-anxieties; on the other, it expressed concern about the poor children, in need of salvation.[97] Concern about child-exploitation and the contribution of philanthropy to the formation of respectable and civilised citizens was further conveyed through figures such as the shoeblack, the crossing sweep and the chimney sweep.[98]

The paradoxical construction of the poor child in these discourses is very interesting. On the one hand, visual representations of these figures constructed them as

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[93] Lydia Murdoch, 'Introduction', in *Imagined Orphans: Poor Families, Child Welfare, and Contested Citizenship in London* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2006), pp. 1-11 (pp. 1-3).
[94] Murdoch, 'Introduction', pp. 5-6.
[95] Murdoch, 'A Little Waif of London, Rescued from the Streets', in *Imagined Orphans*, pp. 12-42 (pp. 17-18). Henceforward referred to as 'Little Waif' in footnotes.
[96] Thomas Guthrie, *First Plea for Ragged Schools* (1847), in Murdoch, 'Little Waif', p. 25. Points made in the original, do not constitute an ellipsis by me.
[97] Monica Flegel, *Conceptualizing Cruelty to Children in Nineteenth-Century England: Literature, Representation, and the NSPCC* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), p. 53.
[98] Lindsay Smith, 'The Shoe-Black to the Crossing Sweeper: Victorian Street Arabs and Photography', in *The Politics of Focus: Women, Children and Nineteenth-Century Photography* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 111-32 (pp. 11). Hereafter referred to as Smith, 'Shoe-Black' & *Politics of Focus* in footnotes.

subjects to be saved into working-class respectability by depicting them in a bedraggled, half-naked, and, in the case of girls, sometimes also quite gendered state. According to Mayhew, girls and boys belonging to this group wear 'rags' which 'are worn by the children as long as they will hold, or can be tied or pinned together', until 'they drop off from continued wear, from dirt, and from the ravages of vermin'. [99] We will see how within this context, particularly the female child body found itself deprived of dress, with attention being drawn to its gender as a sign of its vulnerability and potential exposure to abuse. On the other, and in quite a contradictory manner, the child-figure around the mid-century was also constructed as threatening to penetrate social boundaries – and in that process, it was lumped together into an indistinct but threatening mass, *un*-gendered and to some extent also un-aged, with little distinction made between young(er) and old(er) children. Of course, it is important to remember that mid-nineteenth century understanding of distinct age stages differed from ours. It is true, the term 'toddler' for instance had made its appearance already at the end of the eighteenth century, first employed by naturalist and historian David Ure from Glasgow in 1793. [100] However, Ure's definition that '[s]he who sits next the fire, towards the east, is called the Todler' indicates the term was not applied specifically to children; similarly, the next recorded reference, in 1819, shows the toddler defined by J. H. Vaux in *A New and Comprehensive Vocabulary of the Flash Language* as 'an infirm elderly person or a child not yet perfect in walking'. [101] It is also true that even before the mid-century, laws had been passed to protect the child's well-being, such as the Factory Acts of 1833 and 1844 that enforced restrictions on child labour, as well as that by the mid-century the child had become the focus of idealisation. But only in the last decades of the century did various pieces of legislation separate the child from the adult somewhat more clearly. For instance, the education reforms of the 1870s, requiring school attendance for children aged 5 to 14, created 'a physical stage of childhood which had not existed when children were expected to start contributing to the family income […] often as early as 4 or 5 years of age'. [102] And indeed, in 1876, we see the term 'toddler' applied to children, with Walter Besant and Samuel James Rice describing 'Little Phillis – a wee toddler of six or seven' in the novel *The Golden Butterfly*. [103] Still, school

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[99] Henry Mayhew, Richard Beeard, and William Tuckniss, *London Labour and London Poor*, digitised edn. (London, 1851), vol. I, pp. 354-55 (p. 476).

[100] 'toddler', n.', *Oxford English Dictionary*, June 2014. *OED Online*, Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/202821?redirectedFrom=toddler#eid> [accessed 18.7.2014].

[101] 'toddler', n.

[102] Kimberley Reynolds, *Children's Literature in the 1890s and the 1990s* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1994), p. 27.

[103] toddler', n.'.

attendance requirements that lump together children aged 5 to 14 betray unawareness of the cognitive and psychosocial developmental differences to which, among others, Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (1896-1980) and German-American psychoanalyst Erik Erikson (1902-1994) alerted after the end of World War I. The word teenager came into existence as late as 1941.[104]

For better understanding of the interplay of the visual representations of social, gender and age identity in these discourses involving the poor and the orphan child, let us first examine three different cartoons from *Punch* that feature crossing-sweeps who disrespect and thus threaten the status quo. As we will see, in the process of constructing these male and female street urchins as a social threat, illustrators at times placed less importance on gender and age, lumping them together into a threatening, gender- and age-indefinite mass. In 1855, *Punch* published a cartoon where a barefoot crossing-sweeper tells the properly attired shoeblack 'Now, Young' un! Just give my wellingtons a good polish, cos I likes to go to business respectable in the morning' (Figure 2.28).[105] The sweep's ironic comment expresses a lazy and cheeky character that abuses the philanthropic tendencies by purposefully using a ragged appearance to make money instead of working. Their depiction makes it difficult to tell to which age group they belong, since they might be anything between only seven and even thirteen or fourteen. Interestingly, we can see that as the shoeblack is dressed out of the existence of the street-urchin and into working-class respectability, his gender becomes less pronounced. In contrast, the gendered body of the cheeky sweep, who parades his barefootedness around, adds to the negative construction of these street-urchins.

The un-gendering and un-aging of the body of the poor child, as its social identity was constructed as a threat, can be found in another cartoon in *Punch*. Here, a little girl, once again of indeterminate age, offers to assist a Crimean hero and a woman leaning on his arm, possibly his spouse, to cross the street in return for some monetary reward (Figure 2.29).[106] Her small size, in comparison to the adults, suggests she is very young, while her clothes hide all visibility of physical features such as hips or breasts that might give an indication of her age. Furthermore, we see a de-idealisation of the innocent child. This girl-figure illustrates and deepens the impression of theft and deceit – and thus the perception that these children, with their ability to come into such close

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[104] 'teenager, n.', *Oxford English Dictionary*, June 2014. *OED Online*, Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/198559?redirectedFrom=teenager#eid> [accessed 18.7.2014].
[105] 'Now Young' Un…'. *Punch* (22.8.1855), taken from Stephanie Spencer, 'O. G. Rejlander's Photographs of Street Urchins', *Oxford Art Journal*, 7.2 (1984), pp. 17-24 (pp. 20-21).
[106] Now Captain…', Punch, vol. XXXIII (18.7. 1857), p. 24, retrieved from The Online Books Page. <http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/serial?id=punch> [accessed 19.12.2012].

contact with the upper and middle classes, posed a threat to society if nothing was done to contain them. Furthermore, her pictorial representation as poor creates a very different construction from the feminised one of the girl of the upper and middle classes we witnessed in the previous section. For the girl's shapeless dress and bare feet that visualise her class and articulate the need for social engagement, make it hard to tell she even is a girl.

Then there is the cartoon from *Punch* published 1856, which is an even more pronounced example of un-gendering and un-aging that occurred through the representations of working class or poor children (Figure 2.30).[107] Here we have a lumping together of boys and girls, a complete disregard of their gender and age identity in the construction of social identity. A group of crossing-sweepers sweep horse manure or other dirt from the street, so that members of the upper and middle classes can cross the streets without their clothes (that in the case of women touched the ground) being soiled. The cartoon comments on public perception of the crossing sweepers as, on the one hand, a nuisance that used the sweeping as an excuse to beg, but on the other, as providing a social service that made it possible to traverse the roads. What the audience sees is shapes that might be either male or female, more or less of the same height (with the exception of one individual on the right-hand side who appears to be taller), with the figure of a grown-up crossing-sweep on the left emphasising their youth. What we see in this construction of the poor children engulfing members of the upper classes is that age seems to be conceived in a binary manner as adult and child, while gender seems irrelevant. Gradually, these figures lost their 'savageness' and became replaced by the waif-figure, a child associated with victimhood. However, discourse on waifs also increasingly emphasised the waif's gendered body (and thus age), with contemporary print and visual culture dressing the child with so few clothes that its body was not properly concealed.[108] The association between poverty, absence of domesticity (particular for girls), deceit and depravity, and hence the increasing sexualisation (again, particularly for girls), for instance, becomes apparent in the words of journalist and social reformer, Henry Mayhew, in 1862 that the children of the poor 'are simply worse guarded and therefore more liable to temptation'.[109]

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[107] 'The Crossing-Sweeper Nuisance', *Punch* (26.1.1856), p. 34, retrieved from *The Victorian Web,* Section 'Punch' and 'Social History' (image scanned from a volume in the Athenaeum Club Library). Last modified 3.9.2007. <http://www.victorianweb.org/periodicals/punch/17.html> [accessed 19.12.2012].

[108] Murdoch, 'Little Waif', p. 21.

[109] Henry Mayhew and John Binny, *The Criminal Prisons of London and Scenes of Prison Life*, digitised edn. (London: Griffin, Bohn, and Company, 1862), p. 386.

"Now, young 'un! Just give my Wellingtons a good polish, and I thinks to go to morning service in the morning!"

Fig. 2. Now Young 'Un. . ., Punch, August 22, 1855.

Figure 2.28: 'Now Young' Un…', in *Punch* (22.8.1855)

Figure 2.29: 'Now Captain…', in *Punch* (18.7. 1857), p. 24

THE CROSSING-SWEEPER NUISANCE.

Figure 2.30: 'The Crossing-Sweeper Nuisance', in *Punch* (26.1.1856)

Again, images of half-dressed and barefooted children are employed to express these associations. The secretary of the Ragged School Union, for instance, bewailed these 'outcast [...] run the streets almost in a state of nudity', while an official at Barnardo's Girls' Village described a poor girl as wearing a 'poor tattered frock' that 'could not altogether cover the nakedness that would peep out'.[110] Even more telling is a letter published on March 22, 1862, in the *Times*, where the reader described 'a little girl of seven or eight years of age crying bitterly. Her garments were miserably thin and her poor little feet had scarce any covering [...] I was *unmanned* by the sight'.[111] We see here a clear reference to her age with the intention of emphasising her vulnerability. The mention of 'unmanned' draws attention to how this half-nudity was perceived, despite the young girl's age, in sexual terms and how male emotions were neutralised into human emotions, to deny the existence, or even the possibility, of sexual impulses. We need to remember that before the Criminal Law Amendment Act was passed in 1885, raising the age of consent to sixteen, it had been thirteen. This rhetoric, associating a sexualised body with the supposedly pure child, surely must have shocked readers, evoking not only compassion but also desire actively to do something. Most definitely, it added to the construction of the waif-identity, associating poverty and victimhood, nudity and temptation. Young Jessica in Hesba Stretton's *Jessica's First Prayer* (published 1866 in the journal *Sunday at Home*, as a book in 1867), is a wonderful literary example of such victimisation, accompanied by intense gendering. Abandoned by her alcoholic mother, Jessica roams homelessly through London until the kind owner of a coffee stall, Daniel Standring, saves her. Jessica's sartorial construction is striking in its repetition of the almost lascivious description of a dishevelled appearance:

> her "mass of matted hair" being 'the only covering which the head or neck had, for a tattered frock, scarcely fastened together with broken strings, was slipping down over the shivering shoulders of the little girl […] two bare feet curling up from the damp pavement.[112]

The figure of the waif becomes inscribed with her gender, with the image of what will be exposed once it slips beneath the shoulders creating intense, almost sexual,

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[110] Murdoch, 'A Little Waif', p. 2; *Report from the Select Committee on Income and Property Tax*, digitised version (1 August 1861), p. 16.
[111] Jeannie Duckworth, *Fagin's Children. Criminal Children in Victorian England* (Hambledon: Continuum International, 2002), p. 8. Italics mine.
[112] Hesba Stretton, *Jessica's First Prayer*, digitised edn. (1866; London: Religious Tract Society, 1882), p. 8.

tension. In fact, there are instances where it is hard not to think of seduction, and what we today refer to as statutory rape. Take, for instance, when Jessica is 'shrugging her small shoulders to draw her frock up higher about her neck', while Standring speaks to her in a 'low and confidential voice, and leaning over his stall till his face nearly touched' her face.[113]

The semiotics involved in the engagement with the semi-naked body of the so-called street urchin, however, are exposed as even more complex, more contradictory, when one considers Carroll's construction of the about-ten-year-old Alice Liddell (1852-1934), the daughter of the Dean of Christ Church in Oxford, as a street urchin in the early 1860s (Figure 2.31).[114] Alice Liddell, shoeless and wearing a dress that appears tattered and exposes shoulders, arms and legs, is indeed reminiscent here of a street urchin. Certainly, Alice's sartorial portrayal complicates the discourse of the child-body. Carroll genders a little girl into a highly feminine, sexually suggestive creature, with the semi-exposed body emphasised by her posture, head tilt and unapologetic gaze. Extensive work has been undertaken on Carroll's attachment to little girls, with many critics suggesting sexual deviance bordering on child molestation, but of course, we may remember Laura Mulvey's emphasis on the importance of the viewer's gaze. Lindsay Smith discusses how Carroll constructed 'this discourse on transgressive sexuality to hide a different transgression', namely an 'obsession with height'; she thereby also draws attention to how Carroll's attempts to construct the child as a consenting adult resulted in the construction of the natural child, free from rules of propriety as well as contemporary fashions.[115] Yet, for all her supposed *dishabille*, Alice's lack of dress and footwear has nothing in common with either Stretton's Jessica or the girl mentioned in 1862 *Times* article – for while Jessica's and the article-girl's lack of attire is associated with poverty, shame and fear, that of Alice connotes independence, pride and sensuality.

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[113] Stretton, *Jessica's First Prayer*, pp. 9-10.
[114] Picture in Sara Bragg, Mary Jane Kehily and Heather Montgomery, 'Childhood, Culture and Innocence', in Sara Bragg and Mary Jane Kehily, eds., *Children and Young People's Cultural Worlds*, 2nd edn. (2003; Bristol: The Policy Press University of Bristol, 2013), pp. 1-52 (p. 30).
[115] Lindsay Smith, '"Take Back Your Mink": Lewis Carroll, Child Masquerade and the Age of Consent', in *The Politics of Focus*, pp. 95-110 (pp. 101-03).

Figure 2.31: Portrait of Alice Liddell dressed as a street urchin by Lewis Carroll (ca. 1862)

The waif-figure acquired even more prominent meaning in the 1870s, when Barnardo masqueraded non-destitute children he kept in his homes for 'Orphan and Destitute Children' into a particularly bedraggled appearance to arouse public attention and advertise his homes.[116] In the trial in 1877, Barnardo admitted the photographs had been fake, but defended himself by referring to photographs of so-called street Arabs by Oscar Gustav Rejlander taken in the 1860s and 1870s, of which the Shaftsbury Society used the well-known *Night in Town* (1860) to publicise its campaign. This photograph shows a young boy wearing tattered clothes and exposing his dirty black sole to the viewer (Figure 2.32). [117] However, Barnardo's photographs have a nuanced difference, to some extent even evoking the pictorial persona of Alice Liddell – for Barnardo's children do not shamefully hide their face when they expose their body. Take, for instance, the illustrations featured in *The Graphic* in January 1875 (Figure 2.33).[118] There are two sets of pictures, the one depicting a young girl, the other a young boy – both are 'before and after reclamation' sets. Before their reclamation, the children are depicted as forlorn creatures, without occupation, hopelessly (but directly) gazing at the viewer, dressed in shabby attire; the boy is bare-foot and while it is not clear whether the girl is too, her arms are exposed. After their reclamation, the two children are constructed as reformed (working-class) citizens, properly employed as maid and gardener, and properly dressed in attire that covers all those body parts that should be covered according to contemporary gender, social and sartorial expectations.

The waif-rhetoric with its underlying and threatening sexual innuendo continued in the following years; in fact, one cartoon from *Punch* in 1879 strongly evokes Stretton's *Jessica's First Prayer* (Figure 2.34).[119] On the one hand, it gives rise to a heart-breaking visual image of a young female orphan, her body partially exposed. On the other, however, the fact that it is the policeman touching the girl and taking charge of her (and not one of the women) also lends the picture sexual undertones, making the

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[116] Murdoch, 'Little Waif', pp. 12-14.

[117] Lindsay Smith, 'The Shoe-Black to the Crossing Sweeper: Victorian Street Arabs and Photography', in *Politics of Focus,* pp. 111-32 (pp. 119-20); illustration p. 119.
Image found at 'Barnardo's Poster Boys in the West: Part One', *chameleonfire1*. <http://chameleonfire1.wordpress.com/2011/12/09/barnardos-poster-boys-in-the-west-part-one/> [accessed 14.6.2013].

[118] 'Transformation Scenes in Real Life', in *The Graphic* (16.1.1875), retrieved from an online auction site *CQout*.
<http://www.cqout.com/show.asp?u=http%3A//www.old-print.com/mas_assets/full/M1110875064.jpg > [accessed 12.12.2012].

[119] 'The Clew', *Punch* (8.3.1879), by Charles Keene, retrieved from *The Victorian Web*, Section 'Punch' and 'Life in the City', last modified 10.2.2011.
<http://www.victorianweb.org/periodicals/punch/publichealth/2.html> [accessed 19.12.2012].

reader wonder what might happen after the policeman's 'friendly whisper' (as the accompanying text reads).

Certainly, this is no longer the crossing-sweep figure that threatens (or serves) the *status quo* as a genderless mass; nor is it the sensual Alice Liddell persona; nor the confident middle-class girl at the beach, depicted in the 1880 *Punch* illustration (Figure 2.26). This is a half-naked little girl exposed to the public scrutiny of the upper and middle classes, her attire stripped. Female gendering in an effort to express the sexual dangers these children continued in the following decade. For instance, W. T. Stead's highly controversial article, 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon', published in *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1885, drew attention to how young women were drawn or forced into prostitution, with men frequently deriving pleasure from defiling the girls' innocence, so treasured during Victorian times.

However, the following decade witnessed a very different representation of the 'waif' figure, with intense gendering and sexual innuendo removed. Barnardo's 'Before and After' pictures, to prove the restoring power of philanthropic intervention that ensured respectability by procuring clothes (that were slightly amorphous but expressed gender), had relied on clothing so ragged, torn or small that the child's body was exposed. In the 1890s, however, the waif-figure was no longer exposed to the world. This can be seen in two pictures, taken around 1890 in Bristol, which both depict children at a home (Figures 2.35 and 2.36). [120]

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[120] 'Waif Girl', Ref. XX14 and 'Brother and Sister', ref. XX15 (around 1890), retrieved from *Hidden Lives Revealed: A Virtual Archive*, copyright *The Children's Society*. <http://www.hiddenlives.org.uk/photographs/waifs.html> [accessed 20.12.2012].
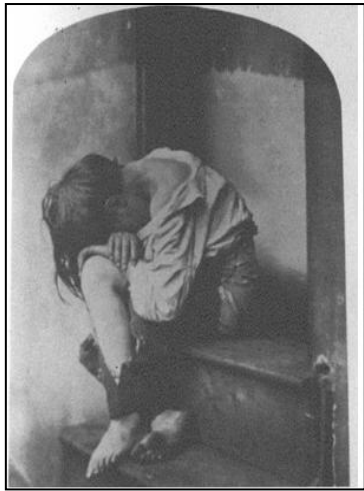
Figure 2.32: Oscar Gustav Rejlander,
Night in Town (1860)

Figure 2.33: 'Transformation Scenes in Real Life: Effects
of the East End Juvenile Mission', in *The Graphic*
(16.1.1875)

Figure 2.34: 'The Clew', in *Punch* (8.3.1879),
by Charles Keene

These two photographs reveal the difference in the construction of the waif identity and its physical representation. The girl in the left-hand side picture has apparently just arrived at the home; while she looks forlorn in the way she clutches the shawl around her shoulders, she is also very much sartorially shielded through this shawl (Figure 2.35). The children in the right-hand picture are a pair of siblings that were sent to (separate) homes, and again, we see how they are dressed class- and gender-appropriately, but again without dress emphasising their gender (Figure 2.36). Recalling the numerous semi-naked of the previous decades, we can say that the main sartorial difference between the boy and girl at the seaside in 1880 (Figure 2.26) and this sibling-pair in 1890 (Figure 2.36) lies much less in the representation of their gender and much more in their inscription with markers of their class, such as sturdy boots and coarse material of their clothes.

Conclusion

Clothes are a material extension of bodies, and it is instructive to see how the body of the child participates in and is affected by the social, medical and political as well as the associated sartorial changes that occurred during Victorian times and that changed perceptions of gender, nationality and class. This study explores sartorial representations of the child after 1880 in fiction, and it is extremely interesting to note how different, and very complex, representations of the child gradually developed throughout the century, negotiated through all these changes.

Figure 2.35: 'Waif Girl' (around 1890), retrieved from *Hidden Lives Revealed: A Virtual Archive*, ©*The Children's Society*

Figure 2.36: 'Brother and Sister' (around 1890), retrieved from *Hidden Lives Revealed: A Virtual Archive*, ©*The Children's Society*

Certainly, by the 1880s, the upper- and middle-class child and young boy or girl were no longer the same as they had been at the beginning of the Victorian era. Boys were no longer androgynous or de-gendered, girls were either not feminised or, if they were, it was to express class-membership that paradoxically either made them indifferent to practical concerns, or vulnerable to sexual exploitations. Indeed, as we saw, the visual representations of the child's social identity increasingly gained in importance as the middle classes grew in size and socio-economic power. For even while the Edwardian era saw a surge of feminisation and bodily exposure of the female child body, particularly of the upper classes, this constituted less a polarisation of gender and more of class. Bodily exposure and sensuality constructed upper-class while a less feminising fashion middle-class identities. Representations of the poor and orphan child body also experienced significant changes. After the mid-century, sartorial deprivation appears to have mainly expressed either a threat to the *status quo*, with gender not being particularly emphasised through dress, or articulated the need for philanthropic intervention, resulting in highly feminised and sensualised representations of the girl figure. However, as the century ended, we witness a change: poor and orphan boys and girls might be differentiated through dress, but there is also a waning feminisation of the female body.

Clothes, in other words, become expressive of the vastly diverse representations of the *fin-de-siècle* child's body and identity. And the exploration of these sartorial representations indicate hybridity and fluidity, with clothes being unable to dress the child into a specific and immutable identity, allowing it to alternate between clear-cut gender roles and transgress social boundaries.

Chapter 3
The Non-Human Body and Dress

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[L]et us / haste / To the Butterfly's Ball, and the Grasshopper's Feast […]
/And there came the *Moth*, with his Plu-/mage of Down,/ And the Hornet in
Jacket of Yellow and / Brown.[1]

Animals and dress in the nineteenth and early twentieth century

This quotation is from William Roscoe's *The Butterfly's Ball and The Grasshopper's
Feast* (written 1802, published originally 1806 in the *Gentleman's Magazine*), the first
of a string of poems featuring anthropomorphised animals instead of child protagonists
and called by Mary Jackson the 'papillonades'. While this anthropomorphism does not
compare to that of later texts in the century, such as Beatrix Potter's, the 'papillonades'
do differ from other contemporary animal stories in their verbal and pictorial depiction
of the animal characters. These characters engage in human activities such as attending
feasts, and display human emotions such as jealousy. Most importantly, for this study,
they also wear clothes or have their skin or feathers referred to as attire. In some cases,
these references to clothing concern only the animals' natural cover, such as the
hornet's yellow-and black-striped body, which in the above quotation becomes this
'Jacket' of yellow and brown colour.[2] At other times, animals are only pictorially
depicted as dressed, as in William Mulready's illustrations to W. B.'s *The Elephant's
Ball, and Grand Fete Champetre* (1807).[3] In contrast, other animal-stories written
earlier did not present animals in any way as engaged with dress and worked within
strict religious, evolutionary and social hierarchies, such as Sarah Trimmer's *Fabulous
Histories* (1786, later published as *The Story of the Robins*). Some change was
introduced with the publication of John Aikin and Anna Laetitia Barbauld's much more
complex six-volume work *Evenings at Home* (1792-96). As Darren Howard contends,
this text invited children to step into the world of the animals and recognise the

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[1] William Roscoe, *The Butterfly's Ball and the Grasshopper's Feast*, illustrations by William Mulready, a
Facsimile Reproduction of the Edition of 1808, digitised edn. (1806; London: Griffith & Farran, 1883),
pp. 3-5. Capitals and italics in the original. Hereafter referred to in text, illustrations and footnotes as
Butterfly's Ball.
[2] Roscoe, *Butterfly's Ball*, p. 5.
[3] W. B., *The Elephant's Ball, and Grand Fete Champetre*, digitsed edn. (London: J. Harris, 1807), pp. 3-4.
Hereafter referred to in text and footnotes as *Elephant's Ball*.

'pluralistic notion of objectivity', teaching them to become 'social critics'.[4] Let us compare the description of the hornet mentioned in the previously quoted extract from *Butterfly's Ball*, to how insects are treated by Trimmer as well as Aikin and Barbauld. In Trimmer's story, bees are approached from an anthropocentric perspective, not as protagonists but as a teaching tool for a child's duties, such as religious and filial ones. The child learns that it should be useful, as bees are; recognise God's greatness in bees; and not hurt bees or other animals 'unless it is necessary for the benefit of mankind'.[5] Bees themselves do not have their own voice and, in fact, the story stresses these creatures are 'dumb' and not 'able to speak'.[6] In contrast, in Aikin's and Barbauld's 'The Wasp and Bee', the eponymous protagonists have a voice.[7] Both are, to some extent, anthropomorphised, for even if the story only mentions 'the broad golden rings about my body', without making any sartorial associations, the wasp's self-description as 'handsomer' than the bee suggests awareness of the self, an ability insects are said to lack.[8] Established hierarchies are set aside, with the child now allowed to perceive the insects as closer to its own existence than Trimmer's child reader. The bee's explanation that it is treated better because it does not bother people and is useful by producing honey may still be anthropocentric, but the absence of the child/bee analogy invites the child to think about society beyond itself, while the speaking animals indeed give rise to the many, until then unheard, voices within this society.

Nonetheless, even if animal protagonists were increasingly given the ability to speak and rationalise, it was only with the publication of the 'papillonades' that the animal-protagonists were anthropomorphised not only through speech and behaviour, but also through dress references. In the previous chapter, we saw how the dressed and undressed child figure was involved in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century public discourse on issues such as gender and class. In this chapter, we will see that the discursive animal served a similar function. Given the concept of what Julia Kristeva labelled intertextuality, understanding the presence of the animal body that in some way

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[4] Darren Howard, 'Talking Animals and Reading Children: Teaching (Dis)obedience in John Aikin and Anna Barbauld's *Evenings at Home*', *Studies in Romanticism*, 49 (2009), pp. 641-66 (p. 646).
[5] Sarah Trimmer, *Fabulous Histories: Designed for the Instruction of Children, Respecting Their Treatment of Animals*, digitised copy of the 12th edn. (1786; London: C. and J. Rivington and Baldwin, Cradocj, and Joy, 1826), p. 115.
[6] Trimmer, *Fabulous Histories*, p. 117.
[7] John Aikin and Anna Laetitia Barbauld, 'The Wasp and Bee', in *Evenings at Home; or, The Juvenile Budget Opened*, digitised copy of the 15th edn. (1792-1796; New York: Harper & Brothers, [n.d.]), p. 12.
[8] Aikin and Barbauld, 'The Wasp and Bee', p. 12.

engages with attire is vital for this study.[9] This chapter thus serves as a platform for my exploration of *fin-de-siècle* constructions of gender, class and national identity during the nineteenth century through the dressed and undressed figures of the discursive child and animal.

In the first part of this chapter, I explore a selection of the many 'papillonades' to identify themes that emerge by looking at the dressed and undressed animal body; in the next, I examine sartorial representations of animals in texts written after the mid-nineteenth century to determine whether and how engagement with these themes changed. Arguing that clothing functions in specific ways in all of the stories is impossible since my exploration spans a century and a wide range of authors. My aim is thus not to identify a particular way of how clothing is used and what it signifies, but to illustrate how dress images contribute to meaning and allow new or more nuanced readings to emerge. We will see, though, that even if early nineteenth-century texts play with the transgression of social, gender and political roles through dress images, they ultimately leave old hierarchies in place. In contrast, later texts increasingly explore and endorse a challenge to existing hierarchies through the dressed and undressed animal body.

Animal-engagement with dress in the early nineteenth century

Let me begin this section by qualifying a claim: we should not disparage early-nineteenth century animal stories as lacking subtext altogether. That would lead to ignoring subtleties, contradictions and frictions only a nuanced reading can expose. It might also lead to ignoring the potential influence on contemporary and future literary discourse their popularity might imply. Roscoe's *Butterfly's Ball* was, in fact, so successful it spawned many imitations, starting with Catherine Ann Dorset's *The Peacock "at Home"* (1807).[10] According to the publisher, John Harris, *Butterfly's Ball* and *Peacock "at Home"* alone sold 400,000 copies within one year, encouraging him to publish similar poems until 1809. Many of these were included in John Harris' collection, *Harris's Cabinet of Amusement and Instructions* (1807-09), which enjoyed

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[9] Julia Kristeva, 'Word, Dialogue, and Novel' (1966) and 'The Bounded Text' (1966-1967), both in Leon S. Roudiez, ed., *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (1980; New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), pp. 36-63 & pp. 64-91 respectively.

[10] Catherine Ann Dorset, *The Peacock "at Home": A Sequel to the Butterfly's Ball*, a Facsimile reproduction of the edition of 1807, digitised edn. (1807; London: Griffith & Farran, 1883), pp. 4-5. Hereafter referred to in text and footnotes as *Peacock*.

great success, being 'purchased with avidity and read with satisfaction by persons in all ranks of life'.[11] Interest waned over the years, but in 1883, *Butterfly's Ball* was still considered 'a Nursery Classic' and one century later, it was included in the anthology *The Random House Book of Poetry for Children* (1983).[12] For all this commercial success, the 'papillonades' have received little critical attention and are acknowledged mainly for their value as a children's text owing to their lack of didacticism. In fact, in the aforementioned anthology, Roscoe's poem features in the category of 'Nonsense! Nonsense!'[13] In *A Century of Children's Books* (1922), Florence V. Barry refers to *Butterfly's Ball* as 'entertainment which made no demands on attention or understanding, which had no "moral"; it was pure enjoyment', while Humphrey Carpenter considers them 'jocose' and Mary Jackson sees their value as deriving precisely from their lack of moralising.[14] Tess Cosslett is one of the few who considers these poems as offering, like their predecessors, moral instruction, but also notes that the 'playful, moral form of masquerade' has 'comic' effect'.[15]

This study explores how dress images in select 'papillonades' bring other dimensions of the texts into focus.[16] Certainly, we should not attempt to place too much burden on how images of dress serve to interrogate contemporary socio-political issues. However, we do need to acknowledge the importance of the 'papillonades', given that they pave the way for later nineteenth-century interrogations of ideological formations through their depictions of dressed and undressed animals. Basing my selection on the prominence of dress images, I explore in this chapter, besides *Butterfly's Ball*, also Dorset's *The Lion's Masquerade: A Sequel to the Peacock at Home* (1808) and *The Lobster's Voyage to the Brazils* (1808).[17] I argue that when some of the 'papillonades' depict social order temporarily threatened by animals that disguise themselves, clothing is used to endorse the hegemonic status quo. At times, we see carnivalesque uses of dressing and undressing, with dress references diffusing potential threats to existing

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[11] Charles Welsh, 'Introduction', in *Butterfly's Ball*, pp. iii-x (p. x).

[12] Welsh, 'Introduction', p. iv.

[13] 'Contents', *The Random House Book of Poetry for Children*, compiled and introduced by Jack Prelutsky (New York: Random House, 1983), p. 15.

[14] Florence V. Barry, *A Century of Children's Books* (London: Methuen & Co., 1922) p. 218; Humphrey Carpenter, 'The Road to Arcadia', in *Secret Gardens: A Study of the Golden Age of Children's Literature* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985), pp. 1-19 (p. 5). Hereafter referred to as *Secret Gardens* in footnotes; Mary V. Jackson, *Engines of Instruction, Mischief, and Magic* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), p. 40.

[15] Cosslett, *Talking Animals*, pp. 54-56; 40-41.

[16] For the most thorough of the overall limited academic discussion see Cosslett, *Talking Animals*.

[17] Catherine Ann Dorset, *The Lion's Masquerade. A Sequel to the Peacock at Home*, digitised edn. (1808; London: Griffith & Farran, 1883). Hereafter referred to in text and footnotes as Lion's Masquerade; *The Lobster's Voyage to the Brazils*, illustrations by William Mulready, digitised copy of the 1808 edn. (1808; London: J. Harris, 2006). Hereafter referred to as Lobster's Voyage in text, illustrations and footnotes.

power structures by making those who wear the clothes of authority look ludicrous. At other times, we see a different use, with dress being unnecessary to express true authority. Those who are meretricious are exposed as lacking the insider knowledge necessary to wear fashionable or ceremonial clothing correctly, while the authority of those in power is exposed as independent of what they do or do not wear. However, we will also see that, at times, these poems equivocally play through references of dress with the notion of transgressions of established hierarchies and mores.

The English, the French and natural hierarchies

Cosslett quite rightly points out that there is no need to examine subtext to identify themes of xenophobia and English patriotism in many of the 'papillonades'.[18] Worth examining, however, is the way in which the pictorial and verbal fashioning of the animal body is involved in expressing these themes. *Lobster's Voyage* and *Lion's Masquerade* are excellent examples of how sartorial images merge with national and xenophobic rhetoric: we see the animal body becoming part of the rhetoric that feared and denigrated Napoleonic expansion and, by extension, shaped English political structures and English (masculine) identity.

In *Lobster's Voyage*, the sartorial portrayal of the animal body expresses a derogatory perception of both the struggle for democracy in France and the increasing political presence of Napoleon I, thus also confirming the rightness of existing political structures in England. On the surface, this poem is a story about a lobster, a herring and a female sprat who travel to Brazil 'to catch a side-glance of their amiable Prince' and who, upon reaching Brazil, are caught and killed.[19] On a deeper level, however, this story also plays upon different historical events of the period, with sartorial images contributing to the depiction of traditional political hierarchies as threatened. The initial setting of the story is England during the Napoleonic era, and threats are perceived as stemming from both Napoleonic forces and democratic ideas. When Lobster and Muscle meet, they begin discussing the 'Portuguese Fleet', '*Strangford* the Wise' and 'Sydney the brave' as well as '*Junot* the Knave', the '*Queen*' and 'the *Prince*'.[20] Such obvious signalling of names almost certainly would have alerted contemporary readers to references to the invasion of Portugal in 1807 by the French general Jean-Andoche

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[18] Cosslett, *Talking Animals*, pp. 54-56.
[19] *Lobster's Voyage*, p. 16.
[20] *Lobster's Voyage*, p. 3. Italics in the original.

Junot (1771-1813), and the subsequent escape of Prince Regent John VI of Portugal (1767-1826). The Portuguese were allies of the United Kingdom and when Portugal was invaded by Napoleonic forces at the beginning of the Peninsular War (1807-14), Prince Regent John of Portugal acted on the advice of the British Ambassador to Portugal, Lord Percy Sydney Smythe Strangford, fleeing with his family to Brazil. He was protected during the voyage by the British Royal Navy under the command of admiral Sir Sidney Smith. Let us look now at two instances where a reading of sartorial images adds to understanding and illustrates the subtle involvement of dress in a naturalisation of existing structures of authority. First, take the soldier-crab, a kind of Lobster that talks about 'the rights of a nation' – ideas that are in the text associated with '*Usurpation*'.[21] The reference is to the proclamation of rights of the nation in France, after the French Revolution, with the king as supreme power of the monarchy having been rejected.[22] When the reader is informed in the footnote that this crab has 'no shell of its own' and relies on 'an empty one', the suggestion is made that the crab's existence depends on a form of disguise – and within the framework of the carnivalesque, disguise suggests divergence from, even resistance to, established power structures.[23] If we consider the arising negative connotations, we realise that through this crab, those threatening the established conservative, class-based rhetoric are disparaged as deceptive and dangerous to society. Further insight is gained through a sartorial reading of the main character, the lobster. This lobster is pictorially depicted as metamorphosising into an anthropomorphised creature, even wearing some sort of attire when his travels end. He is initially presented as a non-attired heroic and admirable general who 'knows what is right and what's wrong', leaving England for a worthy purpose.[24] However, while the lobster leaves to see the Prince who evidently represents the Prince Regent who fled Napoleonic forces, there is the suggestion that the lobster himself becomes a representative of Napoleon. Once he reaches Brazil, the lobster, being mistaken for a different species, is proclaimed 'the first KING* of his race' in Brazil, with the asterisk referring to the footnote that informs the reader about the lobster species 'King of Lobsters'.[25] This confusing change, from desiring to show allegiance to a king to becoming a king, critically engages with the disrespect of

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[21] *Lobster's Voyage*, p. 4. Italics in the original.
[22] Jim Mac Laughlin, *Reimaging the Nation-State: The Contested Terrains of Nation-Building* (London: Pluto Press, 2001), referring to Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (London: Blackwell, 1983).
[23] *Lobster's Voyage*, p. 4.
[24] *Lobster's Voyage*, p. 6.
[25] *Lobster's Voyage*, pp. 6, 16. Capitals and asterisk in the original.

boundaries. Once again, we see a carnivalesque image employed, with the lobster having disguised his true appearance – and we also see that the disguise is unsuccessful and that potential threats to the established order are dealt with severely. The illustration depicts him as almost completely anthropomorphised by a crown and some sort of body covering, while the un-attired sea creatures surrounding him accentuate his anthropomorphised state (Figure 3.1). Yet, the same illustration also suggests his metamorphosis is unsuccessful and that in fact, he lacks the knowledge and ability to disguise himself and function as king. For while he has attempted to disguise his natural, crustacean form with clothes, his antennae and claws remain visible. We also need to consider the satirical commentary that accompanies the lobster's crowning. The poem might ask why the lobster would not deserve 'this honour' of being crowned, but then ridicules this crowning by adding that 'some *Kings* on us frown,/ Who, a few years ago, were not worth *half-a-crown*!'[26] The suggestion is that this lobster represents Napoleon, who, in 1804, proclaimed and crowned himself emperor, notoriously placing the crown during coronation on his own head instead of letting the Pope do it as was traditional. In 1805, he repeated this act, crowning himself ruler of Italy. When the lobster is depicted as being mistaken for a king-lobster in Brazil and thus wrongly donning royal regalia, there is the suggestion that Napoleon's self-appointment was similarly transgressive. The lobster's inability to wear such royal dress and disguise his animal nature here might well be considered as implying political meretriciousness. And when he is pictorially depicted, as early as in the frontispiece, in lobster-form about to be cooked, then it becomes difficult to ignore the intense commentary on what should happen to those who falsely assume power (Figure 3.2).

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[26] *Lobster's Voyage*, p. 16. Italics in the original.

Figure 3.1: Illustration by William Mulready, in *Lobster's Voyage* (1808), p. 17

Figure 3.2: Illustration by William Mulready, in *Lobster's Voyage* (1808), frontispiece

It might be thought that *Lobster's Voyage* represents a unique instance of a 'papillonade' that was particularly politically engaged and designed, chiefly, for adult audiences. But, in fact, the whole genre, so popular with child readers (as well as adults) in the early nineteenth century, partakes in this same kind of veiled political commentary. For instance, in *Lion's Masquerade*, dress images are involved in the naturalisation of the relationship of English (male) aristocracy with rulership and the denigration of France. The animals have been invited by the lion, the so-called king of the animals and the heraldic symbol of England, to attend a feast, hosted in response to the peacock's feast (described in Dorset's 1807 'papillonade'). While the lion considers the insects' feasts insignificant (that is to say, the festivities described by Roscoe in *Butterfly's Ball*), he perceives that of the peacock worthy of rebuke because it '[t]hreatens the rank which we hold in creation'.[27] The lion is depicted, at least verbally, as superior to his guests: he is 'lord of the banquet, [and] remain'd / In the same noble figure that Nature ordain'd' – that is to say, he is free of any augmenting dress .[28] The first thing to note is a reversal of the carnivalesque usage of dressing, implying that the ruler is essentially powerful and worthy of respect, and so clothing is unnecessary.

This visualisation of superiority through rejection of artificial attire also creates associations with the contemporary rejection of the past ruling class that reflected authority through elaborate attire. Following the French Revolution and the emerging Enlightenment ideas that emphasised human reason and the concept of the self as well as a turn toward Classical antiquity, elaborate dress was considered insufficient, even inappropriate, to express authority.[29] Such attire was associated with 'feminine sexuality' (in Britain); Paris, a town associated with 'decayed feudalism and diabolic Catholicism', was perceived as 'the capital of feminine and not masculine fashion'.[30] We see here how the un-attired lion's body adds to the construction of an authority that is inherently superior, valuing reason and sobriety, not depending on attire to construct superiority. Furthermore, dress references contribute to a denigration of France that serves to extol English (and masculinised) bravery and neutralise perceived fears of a potential French invasion. Let us look at a representative of France in this poem, the '*chattering Monkey*' who attends dressed as 'a Frenchifi'd beau'.[31] While the lion, as a

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[27] Dorset, *Lion's Masquerade,* pp. 5-6.
[28] Lion-references from 'lion, n.', *OED Online*. June 2013. Oxford University Press. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/108800?redirectedFrom=lion> [accessed 10.7.2013]; Dorset, *Lion's Masquerade*, p. 7. Capitals in the original.
[29] Entwistle, *Fashioned Body*, pp. 105-106; Anne Hollander, *Sex and Suits: The Evolution of Modern Dress* (New York: Knopf, 1994), pp. 84-86.Hereafter referred to Hollander, *Sex and Suits* in footnotes.
[30] Hollander, *Sex and Suits*, p. 81.
[31] Dorset, *Lion's Masquerade*, p. 11.Italics in the original.

figure of true authority, needs no attire to establish his power, deceitfulness is associated with the image of the dandy. The monkey's description engages with the liberal and democratic sentiments sparked by the French Revolution and reveals fears of a French invasion that had existed since the 1790s, as when the French invaded Ireland to destabilise Britain in 1796-97, and became even more pronounced after the breakdown of the Peace of Amiens in 1803.[32] To understand how this dandified monkey functions, we first need to understand what these fashion references might be implying about France. The monkey might refer to and satirise Maximilien Marie Isidore de Robespierre (1758-94), one of the leaders of the French Revolution, who 'wore a powdered wig, knee breeches, buckled shoes, and silk shirts'.[33] Robespierre, on the one hand, championed the cause of the working classes despite his bourgeois background and ultimately contributed to overthrowing the existing regime. On the other, he was the representative leader of the so-called Reign of Terror that followed the execution of King Louis XVI and involved the executions of over 30,000 people deemed enemies of the revolution. Reference to Robespierre could thus associate the French Revolution with deceptiveness, danger and death. Then again, the monkey might also reference and satirise the so-called male *Incroyables* during the Directory period (1795-99), young men of the French aristocracy who had escaped execution but also the newly rich. These *Incroyables* were young men who lived outside established hierarchies, belonging neither to the old nor the new. At a time when the foundations of the French political system were changing, with sovereignty shifting from the king's body to that of the people, these bodies found themselves no longer defined by a specific 'place in a cosmic order cemented by hierarchy, deference, and readily readable dress'.[34] These young men, a sort of 'avant-garde of French post-revolutionary youth', whose dress signified 'new republican politics', reacted to the new regime through exaggerated fashions, unkempt, even unclean appearances and excessive partying.[35] Attempts were made to regulate dress practices, for instance by enforcing uniformity of male dress, but the *Incroyables* flouted social conventions through effeminate dress, trying to

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[32] Dorset, *Lion's Masquerade*, p. 11.Italics in the original.

[33] Lynn Hunt, 'Freedom of Dress in Revolutionary France', in Sara E. Melzer and Kathryn Norberg, eds., *From the Royal to the Republican Body: Incorporating the Political in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century France*, E-Book (Berkeley, US: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 224-51 (p. 241). <http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft7v19p1t5/> [accessed 23.6.2013]. Hereafter referred to as 'Freedom of Dress' in footnotes.

[34] 'Freedom of Dress', p. 231.

[35] Quotes from Elizabeth Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*, p. 182; further information on the *Incroyables* in John Street, *Politics & Popular Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), p. 37. Italics in the original. Fashion information from Philippe Séguy, 'Costume in the Age of Napoleon', in Katell le Bourhis, ed., *The Age of Napoleon: Costume from Revolution to Empire 1789-1815* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989), pp. 23-118 (pp. 59-64).

'distinguish themselves from those they called the bluecoats' – in other words, soldiers.[36] If the monkey thus references these *Incroyables*, we can identify a critique of political events that overturned social order, conventions and roles. However, in this poem, even French soldiers do not escape critique. If we compare the dandified monkey to a representative of the English sailors, the brave and loyal mastiff that 'no friend he betray'd, and no enemy fear'd', we see that French effeminacy is also associated with lack of a military force that embodies masculinity.[37] Given the date, this might be a reference to the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805 against the French and Spanish navies, and to the sailors' brave service and sacrifice that defended Britain's naval power. This dandification mocks the French for placing show above essence and threatening established social structures, while English sailors, their masculinity inscribed in their body, become naturalised as protectors of social and national boundaries. Thus, by praising the English and satirizing the French through dress images, the poem also diffuses the implied French threat to Britain.

Of course, if we take this sartorial image even further, this dandification also makes the British soldiers appear less heroic – for if the French soldiers are effeminate, then the British soldiers do not truly need to 'fear' them or perform heroic feats. That, in turn, might suggest a more subversive subtext, criticising English soldiers. Certainly, as we will see in the following section, in some of these poems there is a more critical, albeit yet oblique, subtext, found also in many later works of the period.

Social disregard and hypocrisy

A fascinating example of a subtext that addresses the existence of social disregard and hypocrisy can be found by comparing versions of Mulready's illustrations for two different editions of Roscoe's *Butterfly's Ball*.[38] Cosslett's discussion of *Butterfly's Ball* does not refer to the changes between the 1807 and 1808 edition, but focuses only on how illustrations depicting humans as wearing animals as costumes or animals employing humans – to ride for instance – reflect the popularity of animal costumes in

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[36] Richard Wrigley, *The Politics of Appearances: Representations of Dress in Revolutionary France* (New York: Berg, 2002), p. 265; 'Freedom of Dress', p. 241.
[37] Dorset, *Lion's Masquerade*, p. 10. Italics in the original.
[38] The illustrations of the 1807 edition of *Butterfly's Ball* were located at *IUPUI,* Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. <http://liberalarts.iupui.edu/> [accessed 31.5.2010].

the eighteenth century.[39] Yet, the examination of illustrations to the first edition in the light of those to the second is fascinating. In the 1807 edition, the pictorial depiction of body, facial expressions and artificial attire either anthropomorphises the insects or turns people into beasts. In either case, the disguise is uncannily successful, with some insects retaining only a few insect features that function largely as fashion accessories, such as wings transformed into headgear, and endowed with expressions of suppressed anguish and pain (see, for instance, Figure 3.3).

In the 1808 edition, these images are replaced with those of animals drawn in a naturalistic manner and lacking facial expressions. In fact, the illustrations lend the poem what we would call today a more 'politically correct' image. For instance, if we compare the illustration of the snail in the 1807 edition (Figure 3.3) to that of the 1808 edition (Figure 3.4), we see the snail at the centre of both images, but also that in the latter, there is no indication of (repressed) emotions, with the animal-characters depicted as static.

Such emotionally intense illustrations as in the 1807 edition for a children's story, and such sanitisation of illustrations, should not go unnoticed. Obviously, the illustrations might have been replaced exactly because they were considered inappropriate for children – but that still does not explain why such images were initially included. If, however, we consider Roscoe's vocal political involvement as well as Mulready's anti-slavery sentiments, this change can be understood as adding critical subtext.

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[39] Cosslett, *Talking Animals*, p. 53.

Figure 3.3: Illustration by William Mulready, in William Roscoe's *Butterfly's Ball* (1807)

"With step so Majestic the snail did advance." p.10

Figure 3.4: Illustration by William Mulready, in William Roscoe's *Butterfly's Ball* (1808), pp. 10-11

The poem was originally written in 1802 for Roscoe's son, Robert, but when it was published in 1806, Roscoe was caught between ideological convictions and political aspirations as well as potentially the desire for money and a successful publication. Roscoe for a long time had harshly condemned discrimination against Dissenters and Roman Catholics; similarly, he criticised Edmund Burke's opposition to liberal ideas and considered that British-French antagonism implied the rejection of social reform. After being chosen in 1806 as a Whig candidate and elected to the House of Commons, he campaigned openly for the abolition of the slave trade, which he called inhumane and innately evil.[40] In fact, his poem *The Wrongs of Africa* (1787) describes slavery as cruel and doomed to divine punishment. Paradoxically, that same year he supported slave-owners, defending their practices as *not* inhumane, and even asked for their compensation. Possibly, this was done out of political expediency, as part of his attempt to get the bill against the slave trade passed. However, when the slave trade was abolished in May 1807, his constituents apparently were dissatisfied and Roscoe withdrew as Member of Parliament. Mulready might have been less vocal, but he, too, opposed slavery.[41]

This very brief biographical sketch helps us better understand the pictorial and verbal text created through references to dress. Roscoe and Mulready obviously condemned the exploitation of others, but were quite aware that bringing about change could involve engaging in inconsistent behaviour. So, let us revisit, with this consideration in mind, the 1807 illustration depicted in Figure 3.4. According to the verbal text, the snail's inability to dance causes others to laugh; obviously, the snail cannot dance because of its shell. Very useful here is Giddens' theory on self-identity as a product of conscious and active formation in the post-traditional era where institutions no longer determine one's identity – even if the early nineteenth century cannot be considered post-traditional. Reading the snail's frustration in light of Giddens' theory, we can say that the snail attempts to transcend natural, impassable boundaries and deny its animal nature. The pain in its face visualises the conflict experienced by such denial. In contrast, the dancing girls/butterflies in the background have happily concealed all traces of their animal nature and have thus seemingly written a self-determined and

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[40] Biographical information from Welsh, 'Introduction'; Lord Alton, 'The Life of William Roscoe – father of Liverpool Culture and founder of, what is today, Liverpool, John Moores University', A Talk by Lord Alton, *West Derby Rotary Club*, Liverpool, 29.3.2007.
<http://www.davidalton.com/2007/11/The%20Life%20of%20William%20Roscoe%20-%20father%20of%20Liverpool%20Culture.html> [accessed 26.12.2010].
[41] Kathryn Moore Heleniak, *William Mulready* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980); Marcia Pointon, 'Pictorial Narrative in the Art of William Mulready', *The Burlington Magazine* 122.925 (April 1980), pp. 228-35, 237.

carefree identity. However, here is the suggestion that this writing involves denial of one's nature and disregard of other people's pain. Happiness and well-being are thus associated with double standards.

Let us now consider whether a similar suggestion is made about society in the 1808 edition. As already mentioned, the naturalistic illustrations give a static impression of the animal characters – but a careful reading of the sartorial content nonetheless exposes a sartorial subtext. Take, for instance, the illustration that depicts a spider hanging above the festive table, having already constructed a web as well (Figure 3.5).

This sanitised edition may appear pictorially less interesting, but if we read one textual sartorial reference in light of these illustrations, we see a more pronounced suggestion of pretence and deceit. Naturally, the spider will be a predator of some of the attending guests. In this edition, however, the illustrations emphasise this aspect much more and thus raise troubling questions about how creatures who occupy different roles in the food chain interact when brought into contact. The web recalls the spider's hunting methods, and makes it hard not to wonder whether the spider might be more interested in pouncing on the guests than celebrating with them. Furthermore, why not consider the verbal references made to the spider as 'Harle-/quin'?[42] The harlequin is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as 'a mute character', supposedly 'invisible to the clown and pantaloon' and wearing 'particoloured bespangled tights and a visor' – and with 'mischievous intrigue'.[43] This spider, in other words, might not be dressed in this image, but it is metaphorically dressed through the verbal text, portrayed as being disguised with the purpose of some kind of deceit. Furthermore, Mulready's illustration of the web as existing not only above the table but in another location (as we saw in Figure 3.4) does remind the reader more emphatically than in the 1807 edition that the spider may have ulterior motives that might endanger the guests.

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[42] Roscoe, *Butterfly's Ball*, p. 9.

[43] 'harlequin, n.', *OED Online,* June 2013. Oxford University Press. 18 June 2013. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/84248?rskey=jrExMi&result=1&isAdvanced=false>   [accessed 18.6.2013].

"Hung suspended in air." &c.   p. 9

Figure 3.5: Illustration by William Mulready, in William Roscoe's *Butterfly's Ball* (1808), pp. 8-9

Read in tandem with the first edition, these illustrations thus suggest a more critical outlook on social interactions and social civility. The point made seems to be that when individuals from different social strata and with different degrees of power come together, social interactions are potentially based on a hypocritical civility. Furthermore, attention to dress references in *Butterfly's Ball* exposes critical engagement with another interesting theme addressed also in later works through images of dress and disguise: gender rules.

Gender rules and boundaries

Butterfly's Ball visually and very critically engages with contemporary gender norms, using images of the highly-charged masquerade rhetoric of the previous century, but in a different manner than in works of the previous century. Let us first briefly see how two works of the previous century allude to masquerade to suggest threats of disruption and transgression – and to understand how this rhetoric gradually changed: Samuel Richardson's *Pamela*, Part 2 (1741) and Frances Burney's *Evelina* (1778). *Pamela*, Part 2, evolves significantly around female virtue; when Mr. B., Pamela's once-rakish spouse, flirts with the Countess who is disguised as a nun at one of London's places of 'diversions', virtuous Pamela exclaims: 'O why were ever such things as masquerades permitted in a Christian nation'.[44] This exclamation plays upon the charged anti-masquerade rhetoric of the times, enhancing the image of Pamela, who in the first part so successful navigated through immoral temptations as a virgin, as the virtuous wife and expecting mother faced with immoral tribulations. In *Evelina*, references to masquerade are indirect and less charged. In one episode, the eponymous and virtuous hero visits the Pantheon, a place of public entertainment where balls and masquerade balls were held, while in London. When she describes it as superior to Ranelagh, as it reminds her of a 'chapel' and rather 'inspires awe and solemnity, than mirth and pleasure', the contemporary reader most probably would still have understood the critical reference to masquerade.[45] Both were places where winter balls and masquerades took place – and Evelina emerges as innocently vulnerable, admiring the building's architecture while ignorant of what happened within the building. Furthermore, when Lord Merton pressures Evelina to accompany him to Ranelagh,

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[44] Samuel Richardson, *Pamela*, Part 2, ed. George Saintsbury, digitised edition (1741; London: [n.pub.], 1914), pp. 311, 264. <http://www.forgottenbooks.org> [accessed 23.12.2013].
[45] Frances Burney, *Evelina*, ed. Edward A. Bloom (1778; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 106.

contemporary readers would most probably also perceive the danger to which Evelina would expose herself were she to go.

Let us consider how one of Mulready's illustrations and interesting employment of a masquerade image echoes his progressive thoughts regarding women.[46] We see a young woman in a long white muslin dress in classical style, with either a very low-cut *décolleté* or one trimmed with shiny material such as silk around the bust; on her head, she wears a huge yellow moth or butterfly (Figure 3.6).[47] Aesthetic dress, made of muslin, was *à la mode* at the beginning of the century, but her depiction is unconventional because she is depicted as raising her skirts and exposing her petticoat as well as her ankles and shoeless feet to the readers' gaze. Yet, this is not construed as scandalous. Underneath her dress, the reader sees more material that, though clinging to the wearer's legs and emphasising their shape, still obstructs complete exposure.

If we now recall this poem is about animals disguising and that this girl supposedly is a disguised butterfly or moth, we can here see that the poem has diverged significantly from the masquerade rhetoric. This is not the fearsome, seductive temptress engaging in salacious disguises; nor is there any hint of a young woman being tempted into losing her virtue. Rather, it is the image of a young girl prancing innocently around, enjoying her naturalness through her shoeless contact with nature. Unlike the girls in Figure 3.3, furthermore, this girl does not engage in socially inappropriate behaviour by participating in the mocking of other, more hapless individuals. Her depiction suggests that, in a Giddensian framework, she does not allow her appearance to define her and that she has taken control of her life. The sea or lake in the background and the butterfly flying above the girl both enhance the sense of freedom. Playing upon contemporary fashions that glorified the more natural and unrestricted, this illustration visualises the possibility that granting women more freedoms would not invite them to engage in morally- and socially-compromising behaviours.

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[46] For more on Mulready's position of women, see Heleniak, *William Mulready*; Pointon, 'Pictorial Narrative in the Art of William Mulready', pp. 228-35; 237; Cora Kaplan, 'Black Figures / English Landscape', *Victorian Literature and Culture* 27.2 (1999), pp. 501-05.
[47] Illustration found at *IUPUI*.

Figure 3.6: Illustration by William Mulready, in William Roscoe's *Butterfly's Ball* (1807)

The 'papillonades' and their contribution

As pointed out in the beginning of this chapter, the 'papillonades' represent the beginning of animal characters that don dress, the item traditionally employed to separate humans from animals at a time when the human-animal divide was still safely ensconced. Let me end this section as I began: by qualifying my claim. I am not saying that authors or illustrators of the 'papillonades' toyed with Darwinian theory before Darwin proposed it, or that they wrote the poems with a political agenda consciously in mind. Maybe the 'impossibility of the masquerade' noted by Cosslett furthermore deprives the 'papillonades' of the ability to challenge existing structures and hierarchies.[48] Nonetheless, we should acknowledge that in their topsy-turvy manner of fashioning the animal body, these poems, taken together, blur boundaries and shed some doubt on the *status quo*. This means they should also be acknowledged as the forerunners of works written after the mid-point of the century, introducing the use of dress in children's animal literature to raise awkward socio-political questions. As we will see in the remaining chapter, these later works were much more direct in their challenge and disruption of hierarchies.

Animal-engagement with dress after the mid-nineteenth century

The 'papillonades' might have played with the possibility of transgression, but if we turn to Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), published a century later, we witness a very different use of sartorial images to engage much more openly with such possibilities and their consequences. Take, for instance, transgression of gender-identity in the episode where rich and at times unlikable Toad dons the garments of a washerwoman to escape from prison, having already crossed the human-animal divide by donning contemporary driving-apparel and driving a car that he crashes. Within the context of Butler's theory of the transvestite, Toad's cross-dressing can be read as a performance of gender that disrupts the discourses that perpetuate established gender patterns. Flanagan's discussion of the transvestite proved similarly useful, as it allowed me to further examine how this cross-dressing could be read as engaging, either to confirm or to subvert, with contemporary perceptions of gender. One image, namely

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[48] Cosslett, *Talking Animals*, pp. 54-56.

that of a pocket, becomes highly significant in understanding Grahame's critical engagement with gender:

> The washerwoman's squat figure in its familiar cotton print seemed a passport for every barred door and grim gateway [but when Toad…] Mechanically put his fingers, in search of the necessary money, where his waistcoat pocket should have been […] The cotton gown […] frustrated his efforts. In a sort of nightmare he struggled with the strange uncanny thing that seemed to hold his hands, turn all muscular strivings to water, and laugh at him all the time […] At last […] he burst the barriers, attained the goal, arrived at where all waistcoat pockets are eternally situated, and found – not only no money, but no pocket to hold it, and no waistcoat to hold the pocket![49]

The depiction of Toad donning the dress to escape from prison confirms Flanagan's argument that male-to-female cross-dressing in children's books is usually portrayed in a negative light, done unwillingly and involving discomfort. This depiction thus seems to confirm that Toad's cross-dressing is yet another male-to-female cross-dressing narrative that perpetuates conventional perceptions of gender. However, what becomes also clear, if read within the context of Butler's theory, is that in this instance, Toad's gender is depicted as being performative, as something that he 'mechanically' considers a constant. The dress and the absence of the waistcoat pockets suddenly force him to become aware of how this gender is associated with the repetition of acts he performs unconsciously. And to understand how Toad as a cross-dresser can be said to suggest that gender differences are enforced 'by social sanction and taboo', we need to consider that even if *Wind in the Willows* is an Edwardian novel, contemporary readers would identify the Victorian gendering of pockets and the arising play upon Victorian concepts of gender identity.[50] For when Toad suddenly cannot locate pockets, the suggestion is that he also cannot locate his own masculine identity. To understand this gendering of pockets, we need to consider the semiotics of pockets, since there were significant differences as to what pockets and their content meant between men and women. As women increasingly entered the public sphere of work, pockets were visible

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[49] Kenneth Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*, in *The Penguin Kenneth Grahame* (1908; Great Britain: Penguin, 1983), pp. 177-309 (pp. 253-54). If not otherwise noted, references are from this edition. Hereafter referred to as *Wind in the Willows* in text, illustrations and footnotes.
[50] Butler, 'Performative Acts', p.520.

on female garments; yet, until the end of the nineteenth century pockets signified, according to Barbara Burman, the separation of women and men into different spheres.[51] The possession of pockets was associated with a masculine identity and the lack of pockets, or minimal space of pockets, with a feminine identity. Furthermore, even the content of pockets was gendered. That of the male consumer belonging to the middle and upper classes, for example, expressed ownership of portable property and existence in 'the public world of work'.[52] In contrast, women's pockets were related to the domestic world and their 'restricted scope' reflected women's 'apparent lack of control over the world of things by which women were judged inferior'; in other words, pocket content expressed 'the limitations of women's access to money and ownership of property', especially before reforms that culminated in the Married Women's Property Act in 1882.[53] Furthermore, as Amanda Vickery contends, pockets mirrored women's 'more self-conscious, emotional investment in household goods, apparel and personal effects'.[54] In fiction and in public imagination, the pocket became a private space, a space to hide, for instance, private communications in the form of letters, as well as associated with the gendered female body, existing salaciously close to that body that was genteelly hidden from public sight.[55] So, when Toad is described as reaching into his clothes, we see that this story no longer opaquely criticises gender and fashion rules, as did *Butterfly's Ball* through Mulready's illustrations. Reference to Butler allows us to see that this story overtly addresses the reality of gender differences and of boundaries of gender identity. In Butler's terms, the suggestion is made that Toad's identity is more the effect of a performance and not connected to an essence. As will be further discussed later in this chapter, Toad's cross-dressing can be considered, if read within the context of Butler's and Flanagan's theories, as interrogating and even challenging binary thinking. For even if the suggestion might be that crossing boundaries is deleterious, the suggestion is there: boundaries are fluid.

In the remainder of this chapter, I furthermore explore later nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century stories that again depict anthropomorphised animal protagonists that dress or whose skin and feathers are referred to as dress. I explore whether and how the engagement with themes of gender, class and national identity has

[51] Barbara Burman, 'Pocketing the Difference: Gender and Pockets in Nineteenth-Century Britain', *Gender & History*, 14.3 (November 2002), pp. 447-69 (pp. 464-65). Henceforward referred to as 'Pocketing the Difference' in footnotes.
[52] Burman, 'Pocketing the Difference', pp. 455, 458.
[53] Burman, 'Pocketing the Difference', pp. 455, 458-59.
[54] Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 194, in Burman, 'Pocketing the Difference', p. 456.
[55] Burman, 'Pocketing the Difference', pp. 460-63.

changed. Besides *Wind in the Willows*, prime examples of such stories are Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies* (1862-63), Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871), and Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* and *The Second Jungle Book* (1894-95). As we will see, these stories now treat dress in a variety of ways, not allowing for generalisations as to what dress references mean. Yet, we will see that when these texts depict the dressed (or undressed or cross-dressing) animal body, they go beyond a gentle questioning of existing hierarchies that ultimately leaves them in place. For while these texts also affirm some of these hierarchies, the way authors and illustrators portray their animal protagonists as engaging with dress constitutes a more vocal endorsement of challenges to existing hierarchies.

Naturalising but also challenging existing structures of authority

One theme mentioned in the first part of this chapter, which we find repeated in these stories through a sartorial reading, is a continued, but now more equivocal, naturalisation of national identity and English superiority. Two excellent examples for illustrating how dress becomes involved in this process are Carroll's *Alice* stories and Kipling's *Jungle Book* and its sequel, both of which narrate how a human child figure represents law and order in a chaotic or unregulated non-human society. On the one hand, we see how the body of the (un-)dressed animal functions in opposition to the English child body to construct English identity as superior. For this identity cannot be artificially assumed or ignored as dress can be donned or doffed, and hence is always accountable for its actions. Here we see what we witnessed in the 'Papillonades': the exposure of righteous authority not needing attire to express this authority. On the other hand, references to dress in Kipling's stories also contain oblique undertones, suggesting a more critical attitude.

In Wonderland, social injustice is pervasive and Wonderland's aristocracy is responsible. Take, for instance, the White Rabbit, established as having some standing in Wonderland's royal court – but also as having sacrificed social empathy to the achievement of social pretensions. John Tenniel's illustrations contribute to the construction of the White Rabbit as a Victorian gentleman of leisure in a chequered tweed jacket, but they also express that in the narration of his social (and species) progression, he has lost his natural self. Depicted as standing in a non-rabbit fashion

upright, wearing artificial clothes, concerned with non-animal issues such as having to protect himself from natural circumstances as rain with an umbrella, and regulating his life according to time, this rabbit has few rabbit-characteristics left (Figure 3.7). [56]

Furthermore, the fact that the verbal text mentions he wears gloves, made of kid leather, indicates he has denied his herbivorous nature and does not hesitate to consume other (herbivorous) creatures, if only as clothing material. His pictorial depiction during the absurd trial as a playing-card on the left-hand side of the King, standing on a table as if an object and not a living creature, further constructs him as a mere tool of his rulers, lacking agency (Figure 3.8).[57] His stiff, triangular blouse and the round ruff (worn during the times of Sir Walter Raleigh and Queen Elizabeth) as well as the parchment scroll he holds and the trumpet he blows evoke images of a medieval courtier.[58] Such a courtier has denied his own will and voice, only serving to announce the orders of his lord, but thereby also maintaining his supposedly superior position. Possibly this is a response to the contemporary pressures to work for a living an increasing number of men experienced, given that economic and social developments were leading to a gradual decline of the so-called leisure class. The White Rabbit's sartorial depiction to some extent anticipates the critique of this class expressed about four decades later, in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), by Thorsten Veblen (1857-1929). According to Veblen, this class corrupted society owing to its employment of the lower and middle classes in practices that contributed to the exaggerated consumption of luxuries and extravagances and thus not to the economy and society. [59] The White Rabbit's engagement with dress thus might suggest satire of those who allow their self and their body to become the subject of humour, but also oppression, for the sake of gaining some political or social privilege.

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[56] Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, in *The Complete Works* (1865; London: Collector's Library Editions, 2005), pp. 13-47 (pp. 13, 16). Hereafter referred to as *Alice* in text, illustrations and footnotes. Unless otherwise noted, all references are from this edition.

[57] This specific illustration was taken from Lenny's *Alice in Wonderland* site, given that in the edition used for this thesis, this picture is only partially depicted, without the rabbit or the queen. <http://www.alice-in-wonderland.net/alice2a.html> [accessed 27.2.2013].

[58] Richard Kelly, 'Introduction', in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, 2nd edn. (1865; Toronto: Broadview Editions, 2001), pp. 9-50 (p. 38).

[59] Thorsten Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899; Toronto: Dover Publications, 1994).

Figure 3.7: Illustration by John Tenniel, in Lewis
Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), p. 13

Figure 3.8: Illustration by John Tenniel, in Lewis
Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865)

Such a reading, in fact, might shed some light on the scholarly debate of whether or not Carroll was supportive of established political and imperial structures.[60] Certainly, dress images posit young but human Alice as exposing the White Rabbit and the problematic aspects of Wonderland-society. According to Richard Kelly, Alice's overturning of political structures in Wonderland implies a 'return to the defences of Victorian society' since Alice, human and superior, does not engage in a performance to maintain her authority. [61] Indeed, although she shrinks and expands during her adventures, there is neither textually nor pictorially the suggestion that her clothes no longer fit her or that she enjoys the sartorial liberties that her stay outside Victorian reality could grant her. As we saw in the previous chapter, Carroll supposedly placed Alice Liddell outside the world of Victorian propriety and fashions through his photograph of her semi-exposed body. In contrast, discursive Alice is never granted the freedom of Alice Liddell. For instance, at no point in the story does discursive Alice enjoy the liberty of being unsupervised by adults to question fashion tenets, undress or kick off her shoes – a liberty that for instance, as we will see further on, the female (and male) child characters in Edith Nesbit's Bastable stories enjoyed immensely in their gradual comprehension of and resistance to social and gender expectations. In fact, Alice's clothes appear to be an extension of herself, visualising and confirming her gender, age and social identity in this topsy-turvy world she has found herself in. In Wonderland, Alice worries about who she is, asking herself whether 'I've been changed in the night' and 'if I'm not the same […] Who in the world am I?'[62] Indeed, if this depiction is read within the context of Butler's theory, then we can say that Carroll does not expose the 'the naturalized status of heterosexuality' or, overall, of identity.[63] Take for instance the reference to Alice's shoes upon expanding into a 'great girl': when she worries about 'who will put on your shoes and stockings', since she will be unable to reach her feet, it indeed seems that she worries about losing the identity her footwear confers upon her.[64] However, the visual text reassures readers that the shoes (and the

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[60] For more on this debate, see for instance, Humphrey Carpenter, 'Alice and the Mockery of God', in *Secret Gardens: The Golden Age of Children's Literature* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1985), pp. 44-69; Jackie Wullschläger, *Inventing Wonderland* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), pp. 29-64; *The Political Pamphlets and Letters of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson and Related Pieces: A Mathematical Approach,* ed. Francine F. Abeles (Charlottesville: Lewis Carroll Society of North America/University of Virginia Press, 2001); Alexander Taylor, *The White Knight* (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1952); Daniel Bivona, 'Alice the Child-Imperialist and the Games of Wonderland', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 41.2 (September 1986), pp. 143-71; Daniel Bivona, *Desire and Contradiction: Imperial Visions and Domestic Debates in Victorian Literature* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), pp. 32-74.
[61] Kelly, 'Introduction', p. 34.
[62] Carroll, *Alice*, p. 16.
[63] Judith Butler, 'Critically Queer', p. 22.
[64] Carroll, *Alice*, pp. 15-16.

dress, for that matter) have transformed along with Alice and that thus, Alice will retain possession of her identity as a Victorian and English girl. This sartorial permanence suggests that Alice possesses an unchanging identity, which in Giddensian terms can be described as shaped by existing social and political structures. Referring back to Butler, we can say that indeed, Alice repeats 'the norms by which [she] is constituted'. [65] We see in other words how dress is employed to suggest support for not only sartorial propriety but for Victorian society.

In Kipling's *Jungle Books*, dress-references complicate meaning much more, indicating support for British Imperial rule but also, equivocally, resisting contemporary vilification of non-British identities. On the one hand, we see evolutionary hierarchies creating an analogy of national hierarchies when inherent and inalienable authority is exercised by the Indian boy, Mowgli. This colonial subject, who cannot 'slough [his] skin without pain, and run skinless', represents the Imperial authority that, for Kipling, exercises power wisely and justly.[66] In contrast, when the animal body is described as able to shed its natural skin, colonial rhetoric relegates non-colonial subjects to inferior positions. Dress references indeed shed doubt on Laura C. Stevenson's argument, in 'Mowgli and His Stories: Versions of Pastoral' (2001), that the *Jungle Book* and its sequel should not be considered as Kipling's engagement with colonialism, but a narration of an Arcadia with an Indian setting, since they were written for his children as bedtime stories, before Kipling's conscious engagement with politics.[67] Indeed, even a cursory look at the sartorial images employed in the construction of the animal rulers of the Jungle reveals that this novel chimes with contemporary British anxiety concerning Indian natives. Following the Indian Mutiny of 1857-58 and the Jamaican Revolt of 1865, these natives were considered as not bound by a shared social code to respect other members of society and capable of savagely attempting to assume power.[68] I do not claim that Kipling's texts should be simplified as simply reproducing colonial rhetoric by using the fictional jungle-inhabitants to represent Indian natives in contrast to British people or the jungle to represent Indian civilisation opposed to British civilisation. After all, Shere Khan, the tiger, might be a villain, but panther Bagheera,

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[65] Judith Butler, 'Critically Queer', p. 22.
[66] Rudyard Kipling, 'The King's Ankus', in *The Second Jungle Book*, pp. 256-74 (p. 257), in *The Jungle Books* , ed. Daniel Karlin (1894-95; Suffolk: Penguin, 1989). Hereafter referred to as *Second Jungle Book* in footnotes. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations are from this edition.
[67] Laura C. Stevenson, 'Mowgli and His Stories: Versions of Pastoral', *The Sewanee Review*, 109.3 (2001), pp. 358-78 (p. 370).
[68] Patrick Brantlinger, 'The Well at Cawnpore: Literary Representations of the Indian Mutiny of 1857', in *Rules of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 199-224.

the Master of the Jungle, is noble and Kaa, the Rock-python, is courageous. Yet we need to acknowledge that some dress references place these animals into an inferior position to Mowgli. For when the animal jungle-masters are described as able to exchange their skin periodically, in contrast to Mowgli, the suggestion is made that their majestic appearance is a kind of costume that can be exchanged; additionally, this shedding is associated with the freedom to avoid responsibility. For instance, Bagheera has a coat that, like that of all felines, grows thicker in winter and is partly shed once it gets warmer; this shedding is associated with his ability to unthinkingly engage in behaviours that might be considered unbecoming for the Jungle-lords, such as dirtying his coat by rolling around in the dust.[69] It is true, humans also change their clothes, especially with the seasons, but we need to consider the emphasis placed on the fact that humans can exchange clothes, but not their skin. The image of Mowgli's skin that forever feels 'old and harsh' stresses that – in contrast to Bagheera and Ka – Mowgli is fully responsible for the consequences of his actions.[70] Furthermore, Mowgli, the human, is the one who ultimately brings justice to the jungle. When he spreads 'Shere Khan's hide upon the Council Rock', Mowgli visualises the legitimacy of overturning the unlawful and oppressive authority that has terrorised the animals until then.[71]

On the other hand, however, we need to consider the implications of granting Mowgli such authority. Since Mowgli is a colonial subject, considered at the time inferior to English citizens, we can say Kipling diverges from contemporary colonial rhetoric. Within this context, we should note that we also see Kipling diverging from contemporary social rhetoric. For the portrayal of Mowgli's semi-naked child body differs significantly from that of the child in the 'Street Arab' or waif stories of the period. As discussed in Chapter Two, this child existed in its ragged state in Victorian visual and written culture, expressing fears of social disintegration and calling for philanthropic actions. Mowgli, in contrast, becomes the figure that brings social cohesion to the jungle. Postcolonial theory proves very useful, here, in understanding just how the representation of Mowgli's body suggests that non-British subjects are *not* inferior to British. When Kipling portrays Mowgli, he diverges from the contemporary orientalisation of colonised people as well as vilification of the poor child through its associations with the uncivilised colonial subject. The term orientalisation derives from

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[69] Kipling, 'Kaa's Hunting', in *The Jungle Book*, pp. 55-78 (p. 57), in *The Jungle Books*. Hereafter referred to as *Jungle Book* in footnotes; 'The Spring Running', in *Second Jungle Book*, pp. 323-42 (p. 324); Kipling, 'Mowgli's Brothers', in *Jungle Book*, pp. 35-53 (p. 46)
[70] Kipling, 'King's Ankus', pp. 256-57 (p. 257).
[71] Kipling, 'Kaa's Hunting', p. 53.

Edward Said's work, who, in his study *Orientalism* (1978), explores how colonisation and subjugation were legitimised through discourses that represented colonised cultures and people as less developed intellectually, morally, and culturally than people in the West.[72] It is true that Kipling's first introduction of Mowgli in 'In the Rukh' (1893), before the publication of the other jungle-stories, makes it seem that the Jungle-stories leave existing hierarchies in place. Chronologically, the story takes place after Mowgli has left the jungle; Mowgli is relegated to an inferior position, described as being employed by Gisborne, a British Forest Officer in India, in a forestry service and marrying the daughter of Gisborne's servant. However, closer examination of the potential sources that served Kipling as an inspiration for Mowgli, alongside consideration of Mowgli's sartorial depiction in stories written after this one, indicates resistance to reducing Mowgli to a savage creature saved by the British.[73] Kipling was familiar with the many stories concerning feral children raised in the wild by animals, and most probably with the pamphlet of British zoologist William Henry Sleeman, *An Account of Wolves Nurturing Children in their Dens: By an Indian Official* (1852), reprinted in 1888 in *The Zoologist*.[74] As Kenneth B. Kidd points out, the setting of the feral tale had shifted from Europe to India, with these feral children being 'animal-affiliated subjects of empire'.[75] According to Kidd, the 'rhetorical baseline' for these tales was Sleeman's work, a semi-anthropological collection of allegedly true stories of children carried off by wolves.[76] However, while Kipling may have been inspired by Sleeman, Mowgli is almost the inverse of Sleeman's feral children, who have been alienated from society: even after being saved by troopers, they remain brutish and uncivilised, often dying because they cannot accept food and affection extended by humans. For instance, in one of the six of Sleeman's accounts, a feral boy walks on all fours, while his 'features are coarse and his countenance repulsive, and he is very filthy in his habits'.[77] Consider, now, that even if Mowgli does also not wear any clothes or shoes, he is certainly civilised and no threat to British civilisation. He walks upright and

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[72] Kimberley Reynolds, '*Froggy's Little Brother*: Nineteenth-Century Evangelical Writing for Children and the Politics of Poverty', in *The Oxford Handbook of Children's Literature*, ed. Julia Mickenberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 255-74 (p. 257).

[73] For an in-depth discussion of Kipling's sources, see Daniel Karlin, 'An Introduction', in *The Jungle Books*, pp. 7-27 and Thomas Pinney, 'Introduction', *Something of Myself and other Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Thomas Pinney (1937; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). <http://www.kipling.org.uk/rg_something_intro.htm> [accessed 10.11.2013].

[74] For more on potential source, see Karlin, 'An Introduction', pp. 11-20.

[75] Kenneth B. Kidd, *Making American Boys: Boyology and the Feral Tale* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), p. 87. Hereafter referred to as *Making American Boys* in footnotes.

[76] Kidd, Making American Boys, p. 89.

[77] William Henry Sleeman, Wolves Nurturing Children in their Dens (Plymouth: Jenkin Thomas, 1852). <http://www.erbzine.com/mag18/wolves.htm> [accessed 12.11.2013].

is clean since 'when he felt dirty or hot he swam in the forest pools'; in fact, he not only bathes but enjoys it, 'soaking luxuriously in the cool water'.[78] Mowgli, in other words, is not the filthy and savage child of the feral tale of Kipling's times, needing salvation by the Empire and representing the threat of Indian brutishness; nor is he the filthy and uncivilised child of the Street-Arab tale, needing salvation by welfare institutions and representing the threat of social dissolution. In fact, in the later Jungle stories he is 'Master of the Jungle' and when he decides to return to society, it is because he accepts his identity of 'Man' and engages in a new 'trail'.[79] It seems hard to imagine that this fully developed Mowgli will become the Mowgli of the first story who makes wolves dance to his flute to help him court the servant-girl. I am not claiming that Kipling doubted British superiority, but I am drawing attention to how the portrayal of Mowgli's undressed body contributes to and complicates meaning.

To sum up, sartorial images in these two stories illustrate how on the one hand, the dressed and undressed animal body, in opposition to the child body, naturalises existing power structures. We can say that an exploration of dress images allows us to see how, in a Foucauldian sense, literary discourse perpetuates established norms by using the child and animal body as a site of regulation, and thus to normalise social docility. Both Alice and Mowgli are depicted as sartorially and morally superior to animal-characters, unable to shed their natural or artificial cover and thus able to perform their social responsibility. By being portrayed, respectively, within a topsy-turvy or a ruthless world, this performance is constructed as admirable and as something to be emulated. Nonetheless, we also see the emergence of a more nuanced perception of society, a hesitant mention of its flaws, a reluctant admission of a more complex worldview – in other words, a complicated, at times contradictory, subtext that casts some doubt on Foucault's theory that power circulates throughout the social body, perpetuated by all social members in their desire to conform. We already saw that dress images in Kipling's stories suggest a questioning of contemporary British discourses that denigrated and marginalised its poor and orphaned as well as the Indian people. In fact, an exploration of dress allows us to see that other texts of this period, in a Foucauldian sense, not always perpetuate self-imposed conformity but instead, by visualising the possibility for resistance, also promote the possibility of change.

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[78] Kipling, 'Mowgli's Brothers', p. 43 & 'The King's Ankus', p. 258, respectively.
[79] Kipling, 'The Spring Running', p. 341.

Naturalising social hierarchies but constructing alternative societies

In the *Jungle Book*-stories and the Alice-stories we saw how the dressed and undressed animal body is employed in engaging with English society as well as the British Empire. We have seen that as industrialisation proceeded, Victorian society changed significantly, bringing with it more social inequality but also preparing the ground for social reforms and increased equality. We can see the *frisson* caused by this social change increasingly echoed and criticised in works of the period if we look at images of dress. In this section, I explore how dress references in two texts written four decades apart, *The Water Babies* and *Wind in the Willows*, contribute to an increasing challenge of boundaries.[80] These two stories are, of course, quite different; while the first mixes fantasy with evolutionary discourse when engaging with the social ills of contemporary society, the latter provides little immediate commentary on society and replaces evolutionary discourse with a Romantic view of nature. However, both texts are excellent examples of how stories contribute to the naturalisation of class hierarchies by employing the dressed animal body – but also, quite paradoxically, imagine an alternative community, thus endorsing, or at least proposing, a challenge to contemporary social structures.

Undeniably, on the one hand, sartorial images in both stories suggest astounding moral relativism. Existing social structures appear to be affirmed and attempts at social improvement vilified as threats to the social order or as an impossibility owing to natural, impassable boundaries. Indeed, it is difficult to consider *Water Babies* as a story about the possibility of social evolution or the presentation of a new world order of Christian community, as John Hawley argues, or as 'a work of destruction' as Humphrey Carpenter asserts, even if, on the surface, the text is a condemnation of social indifference and exploitation.[81] It is true, Tom's metaphoric dress of dirt, causing his stigmatisation as a thief, critically references social reliance on appearances and the connected denigration of the lower classes. Wealthy Sir John is quick to believe Tom has stolen and hidden in his pocket 'at least a thousand pounds' worth of jewels'. By playing upon the metaphorical associations of the pocket image, mentioned previously, the story criticises adult society for being unable to see past the male world of business

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[80] Charles Kingsley, *The Water Babies*, digitised edn. (1863; Boston: T. O. H. P. Burnham, 1864). Unless otherwise noted, quotations are from this edition. Referred to as *Water Babies* hereafter in text, illustrations and footnotes.

[81] John C. Hawley, S. J., 'Responses to Charles Kingsley's Attack on Political Economy', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 19.4 (Winter 1986), pp. 131-37 (p. 131). Humphrey Carpenter, 'Parson Lot Takes a Cold Bath: Charles Kingsley and *The Water-Babies*', in *Secret Gardens*, pp. 23-43 (p. 41).

and its rejection of feminised emotion.[82] The image of the pocket's true content of 'three marbles, and a brass button with a string to it' proving Tom's innocence expresses the story's condemnation of social shallowness and exploitation.[83] The marbles that offer only simple pleasure during play painfully remind us of a child's innocence, while the torn button expresses resistance to the world of adult society that bases opinion (and the right to exploit) on surface (and constructed) appearance rather than essence, what is kept inside metaphorical pockets. Such dress images hauntingly echo contemporary criticism of social indifference, initiated by Thomas Carlyle in *Chartism* (1839) about what he coined the 'condition of England' and that gave rise to the gradual emergence of social reforms.[84]

Nonetheless, this novel seems to pay only superficial lip-service to the ongoing social dialogue of its times, safeguarding Victorian upper and middle class existence. What Carpenter refers to as 'swamping his child readers with [...] facts about marine life', comes close to affirming the natural fixedness of class barriers through Darwinian principle.[85] For while Tom might enter a fantasy world, he does not encounter a Bakhtinian topsy-turvy world where there is an even temporary opportunity for resisting the *status quo*. Instead, the body serves not only as the platform on which oppression is based, but also as the platform providing the rationale of this oppression: hierarchies exist because of inherent differences and these hierarchies are rightly imposed upon the body. Exploitation of supposedly inferior creatures is presented as necessary for the protection of social order, and only natural changes are depicted as possible. Echoing Kingsley's typically mid-century preoccupation with moral and social reform that became closely associated with the need for cleanliness and sanitation, characters belonging to an inferior species are metaphorically sullied, while those belonging to a superior one are depicted as achieving a cleaner, pleasing appearance; there is also the call for those superior to extend social welfare. For instance, the superior water-babies 'leave the sea-anemones and the crabs to clear away everything'; however, the similarly superior fairies ensure that the crabs are treated better than 'the chimney-sweeps and the dustmen' and wear 'the most beautiful colours and patterns, till they look like vast flower-beds of gay blossoms'.[86] In fact, the reference that the fairies do what 'an old

[82] Kingsley, *Water Babies*, p. 32.
[83] Kingsley, *Water Babies*, p. 75.
[84] Thomas Carlyle, *Chartism*, digitised edn. (London: James Fraser, 1840); Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present*, digitised edn. (London: Robson and Sons, 1843); Mary Poovey, *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830-1864* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995).
[85] Carpenter, 'Parson Lot', p. 38.
[86] Kingsley, *Water Babies*, pp. 172. 175.

gentleman named Fourier' desired for 'chimney-sweeps and dustmen' references French social theorist François Marie Charles Fourier (1772-1837).[87] Yet, Kingsley's addition that Fourier was 'mad as a March-hare' also suggests agreement with contemporary criticism of Fourier as eccentric and a distancing from Fourier's theories of a new world based on the creation of self-contained communities called phalanges.[88]

In fact, transgressing natural hierarchies is repeatedly shown as impossible. Gills might allow Tom to explore other possibilities, literally hidden beneath the surface of water and appearance, beyond the human order where he does not need 'the least bit of clothes'; yet, Tom cannot ignore his human identity of supposed civility and keeps on wearing the 'neatest little white bathing dresses', just like the other water-babies.[89] The most poignant dress images are those that expose the cost of – but nonetheless the need for – naturalising class hierarchies, as evidenced by Tom's gradual evolution into the superior state of water-baby. This evolution begins with him literally stepping on and dirtying creatures of supposedly lower orders, such as the 'original papa' of all beetles on his wedding-day, that is about to begin his new life dressed in 'a sky-blue coat and scarlet leggings'.[90] However, it is eternally denied the possibility of betterment in life simply because Tom is on his way to salvation – and can, as a superior creature, just step on others to get there. Social hierarchies are thus confirmed through sartorial images; transgression is constructed as naturally impossible.

In Grahame's text, dress images reveal how four decades of social change intensified perceptions of the threat of transgression as being imminent and more destructive. The riverside community feels menaced by external threats that echo the *fin-de-siècle* reality, among them being demands for more equality expressed through violence as well as the increasing power of the *nouveau riche*. Sartorial images again construct the hierarchical social order as natural, but also as threatened by social changes.[91] As John David Moore contends, this text is 'a fantasy of class stability envisioned as natural order'.[92] A good example of attempts to naturalise this fantasy is Toad, the character that challenges traditional social hierarchy, with his clothes turning

[87] Kingsley, *Water Babies*, pp. 175-76.
[88] Kingsley, *Water Babies*, pp. 175-76; 'socialism', *Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online.* Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2013.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/551569/socialism/276337/Utopian-socialism> [accessed 25.12.2013].
[89] Kingsley, *Water Babies*, pp. 118, 120, 171.
[90] Kingsley, *Water Babies*, pp. 47-48.
[91] Grahame, *Wind in the Willows*, p. 233.
[92] John David Moore, 'Pottering about in the Garden: Kenneth Grahame's Version of Pastoral in "The Wind in the Willows"', *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, 23.1 (Spring 1990), pp. 45-60 (p. 53).

him into a representative of the *nouveau riche*, the upwardly-mobile destroyer of social hierarchies. In the context of Bakhtin's theory, Toad serves to illustrate that while it might be possible to question the *status quo* temporarily, social criteria cannot be permanently ignored. Eccentric and at times dissipated, Toad introduces Edwardian reality into a society frozen in Victorian times by spending money on the signifiers of (technological) progress that also stimulated social changes, such as 'goggles, cap, gaiters, and enormous overcoat' and 'gauntleted gloves.[93] From a Marxist perspective, Toad is portrayed through dress as the exploitative *fin-de-siècle* capitalist; a member of Veblen's leisure class engaged in fruitless conspicuous leisure' and 'conspicuous consumption'.[94] He wears 'coat and waistcoat' with a 'trouser-pocket' to store his 'silver' and 'cash', and relies on the work of the lower classes for his own leisure as well as bodily and economic freedom, with his housekeeper undressing him and the human washerwoman giving him her clothes to escape from imprisonment.[95] Ernest Howard Shepard's illustration, with Toad wearing a stiff long overcoat, cap and gloves that seem to be of leather as well as his white collar that appears to be fur, indicates Toad is wearing material made of animals – animals traditionally considered superior to him in the hierarchy of species (Figure 3.9).

This material, in turn, suggests not only (recalling the White Rabbit's kid gloves) lack of social empathy, but also a disruption of hierarchies. Toad is sartorially drawn as the unlikable representative of a progress that will bring with it the end of communal spirit and unity. However, as Moore points out, through Toad, Grahame engages with and rejects anarchy and adventure.[96] Toad's actions and dress cause his peers severe discomfort, and as Badger puts it, Toad's 'hideous habiliments […] transform him […] into an Object which throws any decent-minded animal that comes across it into a violent fit'.[97] And decent-mindedness implies in this story rejecting progress but not one's fellow-members. Toad's peers are 'decent-minded' enough to violently reject social change by removing 'his motor-clothes off him bit by bit' despite his 'kicking'.[98]

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[93] Moore, 'Pottering about in the Garden', pp. 56-57.
[94] Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, pp. 23-43.
[95] Grahame, *Wind in the Willows*, pp. 198, 253.
[96] Moore, 'Pottering about in the Garden', pp. 56-57.
[97] Grahame, *Wind in the Willows*, p. 232.
[98] Grahame, *Wind in the Willows*, p. 232.

Figure 3.9: Illustration by Ernest Howard Shepard, in Kenneth Grahame's *Wind in the Willows* (1908)

However, dress images and descriptions of the un-attired body in both stories also reinforce, albeit equivocally, a subtext nonexistent or only reticently present in the select 'papillonades': the possibility of change through the depiction of idealised communities. These discursive communities bring to mind the idealised societies imagined by utopian socialists of the time which constituted the first expression of socialist beliefs, resting on the acknowledgement of the exploitation of the labourer and the call for more equal distribution of wealth.[99] One early example of such a realised community is Owenite George Mudie's romantic cooperative community, 'Spa Fields Congregational Families', formed right inside London, with an insistence on 'cooperative fellowship', in 1821; an example of a late-nineteenth century community is Edward Carpenter's Millthorpe-community, created on the outskirts of Sheffield in 1883 with its emphasis on closeness to nature and the natural.[100]

Let us first turn to *Water Babies* and examine the verbal and pictorial depiction of the Irishwoman, Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby and that of her sister, Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid who, as Tom and the readers discover at the end of the novel, are the same individual, or rather 'neither of them, and yet all of them at once'.[101] I previously argued that in *Water Babies*, dress images repeatedly suggest the possibility of the existence of an upside-down world and a challenge to established mechanisms of control. Nonetheless, images of dress and especially undress are also employed to express critique and suggest, even if obliquely, the existence of something beyond either the mechanical or the theological: namely, closeness to the natural and resistance to subjugation.[102] The Irishwoman, who is kind to Tom while he still under the rule of his employer, Mr Grimes, and who is also the Queen of the fairies of the stream, resists tenets of fashion and propriety by wearing 'neither shoes nor stockings' when on land and, when she steps into the river, 'her shawl and her petticoat floated off her'.[103] Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid, in charge of punishment for cruel and immoral behaviours, might wear 'a black bonnet, and a black shawl', but then again, she also resists tenets of dress

[99] For more on utopian communities, see for instance Dennis Hardy, *Utopian England: Community Experiments 1900-1945* (London: E & FN Spon, 2000), pp. 8-9; 22-23.
[100] George Mudie, *The Economist* (11 August 1821), in Hardy, *Utopian England*, pp. 8-9; 22-23.
[101] Kingsley, *Water Babies*, p. 307.
[102] For a discussion of Kingsley's covert engagement see for instance: Jonathan Padley,'Marginal(ized) Demarcator: (Mis)Reading *The Water Babies*' , *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 34.1 (Spring 2009), pp. 51-64; for overt engagement, see Deborah Cogan Thacker and Jean Webb, 'Reality and Enigma in *The Water-Babies*', in *Introducing Children's Literature: From Romanticism to Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 56-69 (p. 58); Larry Uffelman and Patrick Scott, 'Kingsley's Serial Novels, II: "The Water-Babies"', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 19.4 (Winter 1986), pp. 122-31.
[103] Kingsley, *Water Babies*, p. 55.

and propriety by wearing 'no crinoline at all'.[104] Furthermore, Kingsley's description of her as punishing, for instance, the 'foolish ladies, who pinch up their children's waists and toes' by 'lac[ing] them all up in tights stays, so that they were choked and sick' and then 'crammed their poor feet into the most dreadfully tight boots', rings out with critique for Victorian fashion trends that believed 'wasps' waists and pigs' toes could be pretty, or wholesome.'[105] The depiction of Mrs. Doasyouwouldbedoneby suggests even further removal from the world of Victorian propriety. The verbal text tells us that she does not wear shoes, while the accompanying illustration shows her as having exposed her upper body and nursing a baby. This resistance to fashion tenets suggests resistance to conforming, a refusal – in a Foucauldian sense – to voluntarily become another docile body that submits to what Foucault refers to as the 'regiment of disciplinary acts'.[106]

Nonetheless, Kingsley's depiction of the mechanisms of this community remains ambiguous, oscillating between admiration and mistrust. For while Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid is described as 'kindly', Kingsley's verbal description of her as working 'by machinery' that 'never was made' and hence 'shall go forever and ever' also expresses machinelike un-emotionality and effectiveness.[107] It is hard to see the Christian community Hawley identified in this story when we consider that she deals quickly, effectively and unemotionally with social unrest, employing the very 'shrewd' water-snakes' that shred to pieces all 'nasty things' that dare overstep their social boundaries'.[108] The novel's ending provides no clear solution. Tom leaves this ideal community and joins Ellie in heaven, a place that looks remarkably like the world we know and where, we can assume, he will wear conventional attire. In other words, *Water Babies* does not resolve the question of whether such communities can truly replace existing social structures. Possibly, what we see here is that ultimately, the story ends by putting an end to the Bakhtinian carnival spirit and restoring the dominant order after all.

Written four decades later, *Wind in the Willows* no longer only equivocally imagines a different form of community, where a temporary sojourn can lead to spiritual recovery – even if careful sartorial exploration does reveal a paradoxical subtext as to the extent to which social structures should be abandoned. Read in the context of the carnivalesque, the riverside community is a somewhat paradoxical depiction of a

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[104] Kingsley, *Water Babies*, p. 181.
[105] Kingsley, *Water Babies*, p. 185.
[106] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, p. 136.
[107] Kingsley, *Water Babies*, pp. 182-83.
[108] Kingsley, *Water Babies*, p. 176; Hawley, 'Responses to Charles Kingsley's Attack on Political Economy', p. 131.

collective attempt to escape the existing order that is successful exactly because the spectacle remains contained and anarchic expressions are suppressed. This story constructs an ideal community, beyond existing social structures, where clothing functions to visualise this idealised communal spirit and social cohesion. In the riverside community, animals co-operate by sharing clothes or by dressing up to help each other but also subtly to enforce, as we will see below, social cohesion. For instance, Ratty provides 'a dressing gown and slippers' after Mole falls into the river, Badger replaces Ratty's and Mole's 'wet coats and boots' with his own 'dressing-gowns and 'slippers' after their Wild Wood escapade, and Otter disguises 'as a sweep' while Mole puts on 'that old washerwoman-dress' to help regain possession of Toad's occupied property.[109] Placed within the context of Foucault's theory of docile bodies, these discursive images can be read as portraying individuals who voluntarily wish to conform and thus as encouraging self-discipline – a reading that reveals how discourse , employing innocuous images of dress, can perpetuate norms.

Furthermore, lack of dress references the utopian society mentioned previously. So, when Mole is depicted as joining this riverside community, Grahame's text endorses a utopian society where, as Robert Owen and other socialists contended, laws of society were replaced by 'the laws of God and nature'.[110] For the riverside-community has as ultimate figure of authority the un-attired god Pan who governs in a 'stern' but 'kindly' fashion.[111] As Peter Green contends, the Pan-figure expresses the rebellious element of Grahame and his yearning for 'Edwardian ruralism, post-Beardsley social opposition, wistful yearning for conformity, an urge towards some replacement for Arnold's God as a comforting Father figure'.[112]

Initially, Mole's sensual description of Pan's naked figure, from horns to hooves, constructs a more progressive society. Pan's verbal visualisation as having 'curved horns, gleaming', 'rippling muscles' and 'splendid curves of the shaggy limbs' certainly does not echo commonly accepted notions of Victorian prudery and formal aspects of political authority. [113] It is true, works such as Steven Marcus' *The Other Victorians* (1966), a study of two pornographic texts, have long now argued that Victorian attitudes

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[109] Grahame, *Wind in the Willows*, pp. 187, 210, 295, 297.
[110] In Gregory Claeys, *Citizens and Saints: Politics and Anti-Politics in Early British Socialism* (1989; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 111. Hereafter referred to as *Citizens and Saints* in footnotes.
[111] Grahame, *Wind in the Willows*, p. 245.
[112] Peter Green*, Kenneth Grahame: A Biography* (New York: World Publishing Company, 1959), p. 253.
[113] Grahame, *Wind in the Willows*, p. 245.

toward sexuality were less innocent than believed today.[114] While Marcus' limited focus might be said to also imply that the writers of these texts should not be considered as representative of all Victorians, it does draw attention to at least the existence of sexual fantasies. However, interesting in relation to Grahame's text is mainly Marcus's discussion of the pornographic work by William Acton published in 1858.[115] For while Acton challenged the hostility expressed by the 'respectable classes' against the prostitute and instead humanised her, with the argument that prostitution could not be erased, he nonetheless placed the burden of responsibility on the female prostitutes rather than the male clients. A similar double standard can be detected in the case of Mole, who needs sartorially to metamorphosise to be accepted (bringing once again to mind Foucault's 'regiment' mentioned previously and suggesting thus a rejection of any form of a Bakhtinian 'anarchic spirit'). When Mole is initially introduced, he is sartorially distinguished from Ratty and the others as belonging to a different class. Mole, before joining the riverside community, wears his natural 'black fur' and thus, in human terms, is naked; after he approaches the river, however, the gaze of Ratty, the leisured gentleman punting along the river, becomes the gaze of riverside-civilization, transforming this fur into a 'black velvet smoking-suit' and thus dresses him.[116] In other words, Mole must turn his back to his more solitary but also sartorially unrestricted, in other words naked, existence below the earth. It might even be said that Mole's fixation with 'things rightly kept hidden' when he meets Pan expresses contemporary sentiments of the natural or nude as improper.[117] Within carnivalesque theory, it seems indeed that this riverside society, which exists apart from the dominant order, reserves appearances that do not conform to the established order, such as that of Pan, for those who hold the authority. Then again, we could say that the dress code of this riverside community does not suggest repression owing to rigid rules of behaviour and appearance. For instance, Badger's 'slippers' that 'were indeed very down at heel' may recall the leisure class, which is sufficiently wealthy not to need to care about appearances, but also echo the mid-century Owenite rejection of 'riches' and 'luxury' that results in 'confinement and

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[114] Steven Marcus, *The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England* (1966; New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2009). Hereafter referred to Marcus, *The Other Victorians* as in footnotes.
[115] Marcus, *The Other Victorians*, pp. 5-6; referring to William Acton's *Prostitution, Considered in its Moral, Social, and Sanitary Aspect, in London and other Large Cities and Garrison Towns, with Proposals for the Control and Prevention of Attendant Evils* (1858; second enlarged edition 1870).
[116] Grahame, *Wind in the Willows*, pp. 179, 183.
[117] Grahame, *Wind in the Willows*, p. 245.

anxiety'.[118] Thus, we can say that when Mole, a social outsider of whom the reader knows little but that he does not wear clothes and lives in a subterranean home, joins this riverside community and dons dress, he becomes socialised, but it is in a progressive and liberal society. And within this society, individuals from different social strata come together to collectively and permanently resist the dominant order by entering, in Bakhtin's terms, a 'new order of things'.[119] However, as already mentioned, the sartorial suggestion remains: within this new order, the spectacle must be contained and anarchic sartorial expression be eschewed.

As we see, both *Water Babies* and *Wind in the Willows* contribute to contemporary public discourses on society. And while both use dress images that naturalise class hierarchies, paradoxically both also question these hierarchies. *Water Babies* criticises these hierarchies and even offers a glimpse of an alternative society, but ultimately does not go as far as endorsing unconditional subversion. In a carnivalesque sense, temporarily inverted hierarchies are restored, just as Tom's human – and thus, appropriately-attired – self is restored. *Wind in the Willows* is similarly complicated, but it does offer commentary that is more subversive. Here, dress images do not create a carnivalesque inversion of hierarchies but instead add to the construction of an idealised (animal) society, seemingly superior to human society. And the depiction of this animal society alerts to another theme: that of transgression.

Identity and transgression

If we recall, in *Butterfly Ball*, we saw a first, even if isolated, transgression of the human/animal divide, with children joining in some manner the insects' feast. Let us examine two examples through reference to Queer theory of how the animal body is sartorially employed to disrupt hierarchies naturalised as fixed and impermeable in other animal-stories. In *Wind in the Willows*, we can see how images of cross-dressing construct gender identity as fluid, while in the *Alice* stories, images of loss of dress go as far as questioning the concept of an essential biological species identity itself. Both these stories thus create, in a Foucauldian sense, a subtext that resists the naturalisation of a stable identity, a rhetoric we will see developed in the following chapters.

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[118] Grahame, *Wind in the Willows*, p. 209; *An Essay in Answer to the Question* (1834), p. 5, qtd. in Claeys, *Citizens and Saints*, p. 112.
[119] Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, p. 34.

The riverside society might envision an ideal society outside (even if possibly still governed by) conventional structures, but it is a society almost exclusively made up of males – and the one who does not fully share the communal spirit of this male society through his *nouveau riche* antics finds himself enmeshed in a troubling gender-bending experience. Grahame himself emphasised that this text presents a society of males, free from interference by the female sex; the females mentioned are unpleasant and do not belong to the riverside society.[120] The gender-construction of the riverside is indeed quite interesting. Cosslett perceives androgyny in Kingsley's riverside but also the idea of 'inessential' gender in reference to Toad's and Mole's cross-dressing adventures.[121] Lois R. Kuznet views the riverside-protagonists as genderless because of their feminised nurturing, while Bonnie Gaarden views all male characters, exactly because there are no female characters, to serve as opposites, as androgynous and genderless.[122] Undoubtedly, Grahame cannot be said to have expressed progressive ideas on gender; he did not participate in the ongoing debates about political representation and he did not belong to the Fabian Society. Yet, through the image of the washerwoman's dress 'turn[ing] all muscular strivings to water', Grahame's story conveys a gender identity that resists being grasped and categorised.[123] As already discussed through reference to the image of the absent pockets, this opaque suggestion, that gender identity does not necessarily depend on sexual identity, echoes the *fin-de-siècle* 'crisis of gender definition'.[124]

Initially, Toad's cross-dressing appears merely to constitute, to recall Flanagan's comparison of male and female cross-dressing, a carnivalesque denigration of the female subject-position, with Toad experiencing repeated discomfort owing to the 'chaff and the humourous sallies'.[125] Certainly, this episode does not seem to suggest that Toad perceives himself as androgynous or that Toad's cross-dressing constructs the feminine gender in a positive light. His complaints of no longer being 'the many-pocketed animal, the lord of creation' but one of the 'inferior one-pocketed or no-pocketed productions that hop or trip about permissively, unequipped for the real contest', make it hard not to consider *Wind in the Willows* one more story that

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[120] Moore, 'Pottering about in the Garden', pp. 52-53.
[121] Cosslett, *Talking Animals*, p. 175.
[122] Bonnie Gaarden, 'The Inner Family of *The Wind in the Willows*', *Children's Literature,* 22 (1994), pp. 43-57; Lois R. Kuznets, 'Kenneth Grahame and Father Nature; Or, Whither Blows The Wind in the Willows?', *Children's Literature* 16 (1988), pp. 175-81.
[123] Grahame, *Wind in the Willows*, p. 254.
[124] Lyn Pykett, *Engendering Fictions: The English Novel in the Early Twentieth Century*, eds. Steven Connor and Thomas Healy (London: Arnold, 1995), p. 16.
[125] Grahame, *Wind in the Willows*, pp. 253-55.

constructs women as inferior, owing to a shallow nature that precludes participation in the masculinised world of business.[126] Toad might be ridiculous and immoral, but his masculinity is never doubted. And, reading his suffering in light of Flanagan's theory, we might assume that this cross-dressing narrative confirms that gender-boundaries are non-transgressible.

However, this cross-dressing contains a more subversive subtext, with carnivalesque humour giving way to a questioning of gender boundaries. Gender is indeed shown, in Butler's terms, as performative in the sense that Toad does not choose to put on a feminine or a masculine gender identity as 'one puts on clothes'; rather, his gender identity is exposed as an effect of what he has learned through norms and repeated acts.[127] For the description of what Toad discovers (or rather, fails to discover) after struggling to break through the 'barrier' of women's clothes that so easily engulf him suggests that at least a temporary loss of his masculinity is possible. It is true, Toad's cross-dressing might have been done unwillingly and might be portrayed in carnivalesque manner as both funny and a form of punishment. However, the negative phrasing of Toad finding ' not only no money, but no pocket to hold it, and no waistcoat' at a place where waistcoat pockets are supposedly '*eternally* situated' suggests that Toad in that moment feels he has also failed to find the physical signifier of his masculinity simply because he is wearing a woman's dress.[128] Masculinity in other words is exposed as what Butler calls an effect, not as something natural.

The dynamic between essentialism and transgression is also addressed in the *Alice* stories, paradoxically exactly when naturalising the superiority of English identity. These stories challenge the fixedness of social identity of Wonderland-residents by depicting illicitly assumed identity as being lost or shifting from one form to another, in contrast to Alice's permanence. And by toying with the idea that social identity is largely a performance, these stories challenge the notion of fixedness of biological species identity. In the *Alice* stories, as mentioned above, social chaos rules and inhabitants are exposed as duplicitous and callous. Dress images add to the visualisation of the shallowness by constructing the Wonderland-characters as lacking a permanent appearance, even form. Social identity becomes a product of sartorial construction, impermanent, open to refashioning, even loss. For instance, in *Alice*, the White Rabbit

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[126] Grahame, *Wind in the Willows*, p. 255.
[127] Butler, 'Critically Queer', pp. 22-23.
[128] Grahame, *The Wind in the Willows*, p.254. Italics mine.

admits his constructed identity when he reveals his dependence on attire by fearing that after he loses its 'white kid gloves and the fan', the Duchess will 'get me executed'.[129]

What is even more interesting, however, is Carroll's construction of biological species identity being impermanent in *Looking-Glass*, through descriptions of Wonderland-humans turning into animals. The White Queen's inability to maintain her identity is similarly visualised through her inability to dress herself properly. 'Every single thing is crooked' concerning the Queen's attire, because she fears pricking her finger on the brooch or the pins of her 'shawl in advance.[130] As a result of this fear, she fails to fasten the pins properly and indeed hurts herself, causing her clothes to be crooked and her shawl to get carried away by the wind. Ultimately, she loses her human (Queen)-identity while trying to collect her shawl, turning into a sheep dressed in 'wool'.[131] Tenniel's pictorial depiction of the Queen as a hunched old female sheep behind the counter in a long gown, slippers, a cap and glasses, doing needle-work shows us a grandmother or shop-keeper, not an awe-inspiring queen (Figure 3.10). Her use of own wool for this needle-work exposes her fraudulent claim to authority, showing her as an object of human exploitation. Her gradual similarity, according to Alice, to a porcupine, a being with a coat of sharp spines, further suggests that, once the Queen's costume of authority has been removed, her nature is exposed as neither queenly nor soft as wool. Even after she resumes her human form, she fails to maintain it, ultimately turning into a mutton-leg. Once again, she becomes a product for human consumption, this time even more so, as it involves death. Likewise, the Red Queen turns into a doll and chases 'round and round after her own shawl, which was trailing behind her', thereby evoking a cat chasing its tail in an everlasting futile game.[132]

[129] Carroll, *Alice*, pp. 13, 20.
[130] Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871), in *The Complete Works*, pp. 49-95 (p. 73). Hereafter referred to as *Looking-Glass* in text, illustrations and footnotes. Italics in the original.
[131] Carroll, *Looking* Glass, pp. 73, 75.
[132] Carroll, *Looking Glass*, p. 94.

Figure 3.10: Illustration by John Tenniel, in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* (1871), p. 75

Such images suggest a questioning of species essentialism. It is true that, when these stories were published, evolutionary theory was yet in its nascent state. The scientific community and a large number of the public may have accepted Darwin's *On the Origins of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871) by the time Carroll's *Alice* stories were published, but that does not mean the absence of controversy. Darwin's theories questioned theological perceptions of divine creation and humankind as placed by God as a superior species, with its own specific and fixed essence – and thus held harsh implications for human existence. So, when Carroll's characters are depicted as morphing into animal form and thus losing their human identity, their essence gets lost – which in turn means that in the *Alice* books, species essentialism is questioned, boundaries between species are exposed as vague.

Conclusion

As we can see, reading images of discursive dress, undress and cross-dress helps identify increasingly complex literary engagement with themes we saw, in Chapter Two, addressed in public discourses – humanity, class, gender and national identity. It is impossible to make an argument about the function of dress images that applies to all stories, given that I explore stories written by many authors over a full century. Overall, dress images provide a critique of attempts at social mobility and naturalisation of English identity as superior. Yet, dress images also show that these texts increasingly admit the existence of more nuanced identities, leading in some cases to the suggestions that transgression is possible. Compared to the 'papillonades', sartorial images in these later nineteenth-century texts indicate that engagement with identity increasingly becomes more intricate: ideal communities, existing beyond established structures, are proposed and gender- as well as species-divides are crossed. Undoubtedly, dress images reveal a gradual progression from merely playing with the possibility of fluidity, to the investigation of transgression and even a welcome for, its possibilities. The later works discussed in this chapter were all written by male authors – so, let us now turn to women authors of the period, the focus of this study, and their use of dress in their stories.

Chapter 4
Frances Hodgson Burnett

It has nothing to do with what you look like, or what you have. It has only to do with what you *think* of, and what you *do*.[1]

Introduction

Uttered by seven-year old Sara Crewe, protagonist in *A Little Princess, Being the Whole Story of Sara Crewe Now Told for the First Time* (1905), this *noblesse oblige* reference echoes a theme touched upon in many of the post-mid nineteenth-century stories: the importance of behaving in a socially responsible manner. Sara, by this stage in the novel, has been described in terms of her 'embroidered' clothes and 'hats with great, soft ostrich feathers' as well as 'handkerchiefs and silk stockings in such abundant supplies'.[2] These items of dress perhaps hint at the kindness and gentleness she will come to exhibit, but they also suggest childish naivety, even hypocrisy and decadence.[3] For Sara speaks these words at a time when her father, Captain Crewe, has just multiplied his wealth through his involvement with diamond mines. And, despite what she says, we know that Sara does care about appearances, dressing so luxuriously that she appears to be 'at least some foreign princess – perhaps the little daughter of an Indian rajah'.[4] In the process of the story, we learn that love for appearances signifies self-indulgence, and see that Sara pays dearly for her almost irreverent donning of fine attire.

Certainly, the theme of fashionableness to express social critique in stories was nothing new. As Claudia Mills points out, quoting Anne Scott MacLeod, for many authors fashionableness 'clearly stood for an entire value system wrongly based'.[5] This was, after all, a time when contemporary discourses were fed through mounting concerns about urban poverty and the perception of the poor as a distinct breed that was biologically determined to degenerate and concomitant fears about their high fertility

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[1] Frances Hodgson Burnett, *A Little Princess, Being the Whole Story of Sara Crewe Now Told for the First Time* (1905; New York: Signet Classics, 1990), p. 54; italics in the original. Referred to hereafter as *Little Princess* in text, illustrations and footnotes.
[2] Burnett, *Little Princess*, p. 13.
[3] Burnett, *Little Princess*, p. 13.
[4] Burnett, *Little Princess*, p. 13.
[5] Claudia Mills, 'Choosing a Way of Life: *Eight Cousins* and *Six to Sixteen*', referring to Anne Scott MacLeod, *A Moral Tale: Children's Fiction and American Culture, 1820-1860.*

rate.[6] The surveys undertaken in the 1880s and 1890s by Charles Booth had revealed appalling living conditions among London's poor, and the Boer War (1899-1902) had exposed poor health and a high number of cases with physical deficiencies among the working classes. Beliefs in the possibility of social improvement were diminishing, and texts such as Benjamin Kidd's *Social Evolution* (1884) even suggested that evolution had gone into reverse. We already saw in Chapters Two and Three how public and literary discourses employed the dressed and undressed child-figure as well as the dressed and undressed animal-body (often alongside a child) to engage with social issues, adding to the naturalisation of perceptions of class, gender and identity.

Initially, it appears that dress images in *Little Princess* also alert to moral inertia and decadence, but without questioning established structures. After all, for all the criticism of Sara's overstated appearance, *Little Princess* is a 'from riches to rags to riches' story, one that Frances Hodgson Burnett herself experienced. Having descended from middle-class comfort into poverty in England after her father's death, she emigrated with her family to America where her writing allowed her to live a comfortable life, travelling between America and Europe. And Burnett certainly saw fashion as an expression of this comfort, not reluctant at all to show the world she could afford fine dresses. Take, for instance, Burnett's order of her wedding dress of 'white satin and tulle, and orange-blossom and jessamine' from Paris while she lived in Knoxville, and attempts to postpone her wedding when the dress did not arrive on time or, once they had moved to Washington, her public show of her self-made new dresses:

> At the appointed hour the sliding doors between the parlor and the dining-room were rolled apart, to disclose to the audience that had been herded in the front room – Frances, in all the dainty glory of her newly finished toilette. She took the uproarious applause, bowing and smiling, and the gown was voted in every way a success.[7]

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[6] For more on contemporary discourses on the poor, see for instance: Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c.1848- c.1918* (1989; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); William P. Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel: 1880-1940* (1994; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010 [1994]); Troy Boone, *Youth of Darkest England: Working-Class Children at the Heart of Victorian Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Donald A. MacKenzie, *Statistics in Britain, 1865-1930: The Social Construction of Scientific Knowledge* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981).

[7] Gretchen Gerzina, *Frances Hodgson Burnett: The Unpredictable Life of the Author of The Secret Garden* (Great Britain: Pimlico, 2005), p. 53. Hereafter referred to as Gerzina, *Burnett*, in the footnotes; Vivian Burnett, *The Romantick Lady (Frances Hodgson Burnett): The Life Story of an Imagination* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1927), p. 78, in Gerzina, *Burnett*, p. 84.

Burnett, however, not only enjoyed wearing fashion, but also possessed what Christine Bayles Kortsch describes as 'literacy in fabrics', the ability to sew and interpret dress, which, at the time, was associated with femininity and shared by women of all classes.[8] For instance, she actively sought to control public opinion through the sartorial fashioning of herself. She wore 'loose tea gowns' with their progressive associations at home, but in public appeared as 'the tightly corseted little woman'.[9] She also publically renounced she liked "Kate Greenaway dresses', a fashion for girls based on late eighteenth-century Regency fashion that had been made popular by British artist and illustrator of children's books, Kate Greenaway and that, as we saw in the previous chapter, resisted Victorian fashion tenets that wanted women to wear restrictive attire.[10] Second, Burnett herself sewed clothes for herself and her boys, at least as late as the 1880s, which also suggests that, for Burnett, 'dress literacy' in the form of knowing to sew, was important.[11] In this chapter, I argue that we need to acknowledge the possibility that, just as in her life, Burnett used dress in her stories to elicit specific responses. I explore the centrality, but also complexity, of discursive dress in Burnett's engagement with class and gender identity not only in *Little Princess* and *Fauntleroy*, but also *The Secret Garden* (1911) and *The Lost Prince* (1915).[12] As we will see, images of dress do many things in Burnett's stories, and I will attempt to tease out some of the contradictory functions of dress in Burnett's construction of an identity characterised by subtleties and complexities.

I will first discuss the significant and yet ignored role dress images play in naturalising, in a Foucauldian sense, conservative perceptions of an inherent class identity. These images suggest that Burnett held idealised notions of Britain that prevented her from endorsing an ultimate dissolution of this system. Within Giddens' framework, we might say that Burnett's stories are yet located in a traditional society, where individuals accept the identity imposed upon them by tradition and hierarchical structures. In the next section, I draw attention to how dress images, paradoxically, disrupt such a conservative narrative and argue that Burnett's own position and acquaintance with American democratic ideas allowed her to perceive problematic aspects of a class system where social identity was fixed through inherited titles and

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[8] Kortsch, *Dress Culture*, p. 5.
[9] Gerzina, *Burnett*, pp. 123-24.
[10] Gerzina, *Burnett*, p. 81.
[11] Gerzina, *Burnett*, pp. 83, 98.
[12] Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Secret Garden* (1911; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Hereafter referred to as *Secret Garden* in text, illustrations and footnotes; *The Lost Prince*, digitised edn. (New York: The Century Co., 1915). Hereafter referred to as *Lost Prince* in text, illustrations and footnotes.

positions. Playing upon post-Darwinian ideas of physical, physiological, and mental traits being determined by heredity, Burnett's stories suggest through representations of the dressed body that while class- and gender-identity is inherent, associated behaviours are not. My discussion will conclude with an exploration of how images of dress cast doubt on established notions of the stability of identity. In her texts, the child body itself, maturing into an adult body, becomes a symbol of transformation, revealing how (adult and gendered) identity can become either so distorted that it remains only a hollow shell or can transform into a source of energy. In a Giddensian sense, Burnett's characters may thus not have the possibility of writing a self-selected identity, but they do have the responsibility of making choices that ensure that this inherent identity remains healthy, capable of restoring an ailing social body.

Dress and the conservative Burnett

Upper classes and the dress of nobility

It is true, there is not much originality in parroting scholarly claims that Burnett is a conservative author or that dress is involved in visualising aristocratic identity. However, there is the need to draw attention to just how significant clothing detail is in Burnett's idealisation of society in which class identity is inherent and inalienable. Since this chapter began with reference to *Little Princess*, let us begin this section with a discussion of how dress and shoe images are central in constructing Sara as naturally noble. Following, we will discuss how dress in *Fauntleroy* and *Secret Prince* also visualises the concept that an aristocratic identity is undeniably visible, regardless of circumstances.

Sara's class identity is, for instance, sartorially expressed through evocation of hereditary and medieval nobility. Sara has 'sable and ermine on her coats, and real Valenciennes lace on her underclothing'.[13] Ermine symbolises Sara's purity of character, owing to the belief that the ermine would rather die at the hands of hunters than soil its white coat; ermine also constructs Sara as a member of the aristocracy, since ermine was used in the official robes of judges and the state robes of peers,

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[13] Burnett, *Little Princess*, pp. 16-17. Information on sable and ermine from Boria Sax, 'Beaver, Porcupine, Badger and Miscellaneous Rodents', in *The Mythical Zoo: An Encyclopedia of Animals in World Myth, Legend, and Literature* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2001); *Oxford English Dictionary*, vols. III and IX (1933; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), pp. 272-73 and p. 5, respectively.

including the British House of Lords. Valenciennes lace enhances these aristocratic associations, since it was only after the 1900s that the non-upper classes could gradually afford it.[14] The fact that it is specifically Sara's underwear that is made of Valenciennes lace suggests this aristocracy should be perceived as existing beneath the outer layers and thus not be considered as a costume donned but instead as marker of the inherentness of her noble identity. Later, during the most difficult times, the inalienability of Sara's class identity is expressed through Sara's dreams of 'good shoes and a long, thick coat and merino stockings', considered today, as then, quality clothes, not bare necessities needed to survive.[15] Merino wool is even today expensive, considered the softest and whitest wool; certainly, during Burnett's time, it was a luxury import item, since pure-bred merino sheep could not be kept in Britain, cross-bred sheep wool was considered inferior, and manufacturing improvements in the 1830s had made only cotton-merino wool mixtures more accessible.[16] This merino wool further represents Sara's refusal to accept social denigration, since wool was considered more impractical by members of the working and lower classes in comparison to cotton textiles such as fustian, being more 'difficult to wash, dry and keep clean'.[17] Sara, seen through Foucault's prism, is a wonderful example of the successful indoctrination of belief in inherent superiority, unable even for practical reasons to adjust her self-narrative to circumstances. That in turn implies that, in Giddens' sense, Sara does not write her own narrative, but accepts the one she has been taught naturally belongs to her. Such rhetoric serves to naturalise upper-class identity as noble, not to subvert it.

References to shoes, bringing to mind the *Cinderella* story and its construction of inalienable nobility, are also vital to Burnett's formulation of an idealised class-based society governed by bloodlines. As we know, in *Cinderella*, Cinderella's glass slipper

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[14] Information of Valenciennes lace taken from: 'Valenciennes', *Oxford English Dictionary*, vol. XII (1933; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), p. 20; 'Valenciennes Lace,' *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Encyclopædia Britannica Online, 2011. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/621999/Valenciennes-lace> [accessed 12.6.2011]; 'Valenciennes Lace History', *A Lace Lover's Diary*. <http://belovedlinens.net/lace/valenciennes-laceh.html?> [accessed 12.6.2011].
[15] Burnett, *Little Princess*, pp. 140-41.
[16] Information on merino from Payson Usher, *The Industrial History Of England*, digitised edn. (1920; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company; Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1930), p. 196; Jim McAloon, 'Information, Staples Production, and Environmental Change' (Lincoln University New Zealand; Paper Presented to the Asia-Pacific Economic and Business History Conference Sydney, February 2007), pp. 7-8, referring to *Otago Witness*, 23 Jan 1869, p. 16. <http://ehsanz.econ.usyd.edu.au/papers/McAloon.pd> [accessed 9.1.2009]; David Jenkins, 'The Western Wool Textile Industry in the Nineteenth Century', in *The Cambridge History of Western Textiles I*, ed. David Jenkins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 761-808.
[17] Alison E. M. Toplis, 'The Non-Elite Consumer and "Wearing Apparel" in Herefordshire and Worcestershire, 1800-1850' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Wolverhampton, 2008), pp. 163, 183.

for some reason remains a glass slipper after midnight, while coach and gown change back into pumpkin and tattered clothing. Upon Sara's arrival at the seminary, unlikable pupil Lavinia Herbert responds to her friend Jessie's admiration of Sara having 'such little feet', with the retort, 'even big feet can be made to look small if you have a clever shoemaker'.[18] Lavinia's remark echoes Victorian perceptions that individuals not belonging to the upper or middle classes were more robust and had broad feet, while members of upper classes had small feet and slender ankles, expressing their delicate fragility. Take, for instance, the description of feet of upper-class Meta Rivers in Charlotte M. Yonge's *The Daisy Chain, or Aspirations* (1856). Meta, initially a spoiled girl who changes under the guidance of the May-family, has a 'little elegant figure, whose great characteristic was a look of exquisite finish […] in everything she wore, from the braids of black silk hair, to the little shoe on her foot'.[19] Sara, like Meta, is inherently noble and *Little Princess* rejects the possibility of class-identity being falsely appropriated, as if it could be donned or doffed like a costume. Those who believe it can be are constructed as ignorant, even obtuse. Lavinia proves to be a jealous and an ignorant girl, quick to make judgements without deliberation. After all, a girl of her class would be expected to know that since shoe-size still involved careful hand-work, only a well-off individual would be able to afford such a shoe-maker.[20] Similarly, all the girls at the Seminary who judge Sara based on dress and money, are described as 'a set of dull, matter-of-fact young people'.[21] In *Cinderella*, Cinderella's stepmother and stepsisters were similarly jealous and dull, not able to perceive that Cinderella's body confirmed a noble and inherent identity. Cinderella's physical reality made in vain the stepmother's efforts to deprive Cinderella of her rightful social position and the stepsisters' attempts to get their foot to fit into glass slipper and class resulted in self-mutilation. In *Little Princess*, we see again how the physical body is depicted as reflecting class identity: at the end of the story, with Sara's fortunes restored and augmented, Lavinia and all the other jealous people are faced with the reality that Sara's 'slender feet looked as they had done when Jessie had admired them.[22]

We can also see sartorial images involved in the construction and naturalisation of an inherent and inalienable social identity in *Fauntleroy* and *Lost Prince*. Before we

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[18] Burnett, *Little Princess*, pp. 18-19.
[19] Yonge, *Daisy Chain*, vol. 2, p. 267.
[20]*A Victorian Passage into Time*.
<http://www.victorianpassage.com/2008/12/victorian_shoes_in_the_making.php> [accessed 2.7.2012]; Helena Michie, 'Under Victorian Skirts': The Bodies Beneath', in Herbert F. Tucker, ed., *A Companion to Victorian Literature & Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1999), pp. 407-24.
[21] Burnett, *Little Princess*, pp. 87; 89-90; 26-27.
[22] Burnett, *Little Princess*, p. 191.

continue, let us first briefly mention the associations with Charles I and the Cavaliers as well as Charles II, given the inspiration for Cedric's and Marco Loristan's appearance. As already mentioned in the Introduction, the Cedric-look was inspired by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century paintings, such as Thomas Gainsborough's painting *Blue Boy* (1770) (Figure 1.7), but that in turn was a pastiche of earlier paintings by Anthony Van Dyke (1599-1641) (Figure 4.1).[23]

Lost Prince was inspired after Burnett was shown in Vienna the portrait of 15-year-old Prince Ruprecht von der Pfalz (1619-82), again by van Dyke, which reminded her of her deceased son Lionel.[24] Cedric's situation as well as Stefan and Marco Lorristan's situations bear a slight resemblance to that of the future King Charles II of England, Scotland and Ireland (1630-85) and Prince Rupert the Cavalier, also known as Ruprecht von der Pfalz, Duke of Cumberland (1619-82), with both these men finding their lawful successions to power thwarted. Seven-year-old, semi-orphan Cedric is initially also deprived of his title because of his grandfather's refusal to acknowledge his parents' marriage, and he lives with his mother in America. Once his uncle dies, his grandfather invites him to England and grants him the title of lord by his grandfather. This lordship is soon after endangered by the appearance of his aunt and cousin, who desire falsely to deprive Cedric of his title, but his American working-class friends expose Cedric's aunt as an impostor and the lordship is restored. In *Lost Prince*, Stefan Loristan is the descendent of the legitimate (through lineage) but objectionable King Ivor Fedorovitch, who was assassinated 500 years previously but whose son, Prince Ivor, survived with the help of peasants. Present-day Samavia is gradually falling apart in the hands of a ruthless and illegitimate authority, with two factions, the Maranovitchs and the Iarovitchs, struggling for power. It takes Loristan's son, 12-year old Marco and the 13-year old Jem Ratcliffe, better known as The Rat, to form a semi-secret society and travel across Europe to give a sign that begins a revolution and ends the dictatorship in Samavia, restoring Stefan Loristan to the throne.

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[23] Painting by Anthony van Dyke, of Mary Princess Royal and William, Prince of Orange (c. 1636) found at *Art Experts*. <http://www.artexpertswebsite.com/pages/artists/dobson.php> [accessed 15.3.2014].
[24] Clark, *Kiddie Lit*, p. 27, referring to Anne Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence: the History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood* (London: Thames, 1998), pp. 46-47.

Figure 4.1: Painting by Anthony van Dyke, of Mary Princess Royal and William, Prince of Orange (c. 1636), held at Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

In both stories, dress images repeatedly stress that a truly noble character, both in terms of class and psychological identity, cannot but manifest itself to society and be acknowledged regardless of social position and appearance. When Mary, the domestic help to Cedric and his mother, says that Colin 'loike a young lord he looks', his inherent aristocratic identity is depicted as shining through.[25] We need to realise here that Cedric at the time is a boy that belongs to the middle-classes and has friends who belong to the lower-and working classes, a boy who enjoys running and playing – and this makes his appearance seem, at best, impractical and out of place. For if we look at its counterpart in real life, this suit was described as 'made of an impractical material and liable to wear' as well as 'tied to fashion and hence liable to become outdated as well as preventing children to 'work in factories or mines, or on the farm. Moreover, putting on a Fauntleroy outfit was complicated; most boys needed assistance'.[26] Yet, Burnett's construction of Cedric as possessing an inherent nobility seems to have been so successful that it popularised the frilly Fauntleroy-look of knickerbockers and lace collars, discussed in Chapter Two, as a sign of (real or desired) upper-class identity. After all, according to 'Ladies Gossip', published 1890 in *Otago Witness*, even '[t]he Duke's [of Albany] mamma […] would like to dress him after the Fauntleroy fashion, but there is a tradition in the English Royal Family that boys must wear the Highland costume until the Queen deems proper to order a change'.[27] And indeed, parents chose 'sailor suits that were definitely non-utilitarian, made from velvet trimmed with lace and fancy buttons', a 'trimming most associated with 'Fauntleroy' or 'Vandyke' velvet suits', and whose 'use invoked references to aristocratic practices of the seventeenth century' exactly because their superiority lay, in comparison to other sailor suits, in their impracticability and their fashionability.[28] For the same reasons, the 'Fauntleroy suit was considered a status symbol' in Victorian America.[29]As Kristen Stewart points out, [o]ne of the sharpest criticisms levelled at followers of the Fauntleroy fad [in America] was that they aspired to join the European aristocracy'; Anna Wilson also contends that 'the poor and the provincial copied the fashion from upper-middle-class

[25] Burnett, *Fauntleroy*, pp. 13-14.
[26] Rose, *Boys' Clothes*, p. 200; Leonard Schlup, 'Little Lord Fauntleroy Suits for Boys', in Leonard Schlup and James G. Ryan, eds., *Historical Dictionary of the Gilded Age* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2003), p. 286.
[27] 'Ladies Gossip', *Otago Witness*, 1919 (November 1890), p.37. <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&d=OW18901127.2.125> [accessed 23.7.2014].
[28] Rose, *Boys' Clothes*, p. 200.
[29] Schlup, 'Little Lord Fauntleroy Suits for Boys', p. 286.

urban families'.[30] It seems that this belief in being able to express nobility through the Fauntleroy attire was particularly popular among women. In a fictional conversation between men, described in John Kendrick Bangs' 'The Paradise Club' (1895), a social commentary in *The Ladies Home Journal*, the mother perceives her son as 'undoubtedly the most perfect specimen of a nobleman extant […] so she puts velveteen trousers on him; covers his calves with leather leggings lets his hair fall in curls on his shoulders, and tops him off with a Tam o'Shanter'; the men in contrast are depicted as quite aware that the boy 'isn't like Fauntleroy, and you could spank him with the book […[without hammering a bit of the Fauntleroy nature into him'.[31]

But as already briefly mentioned in the Introduction, this popularity also had a backlash, which as Anna Wilson argues, involved 'loathing and apologia'.[32] In the Introduction we read Harvey Darton's complaint that 'the odious little prig in the lace collar is not dead yet'; Darton also asserted that the novel 'ran through England like a sickly fever.[33] Scottish novelist and journalist Sir Compton Mackenzie (1883-1972) probably voiced the opinions of many boys when in 1962 he recalled that as a six-year-old in 1889, 'the confounded Little Lord Fauntleroy craze' obliged 'to my being given as a party dress the Fauntleroy costume'; he then mentions that 'other boys were inclined to giggle' and that 'after protesting in vain' he 'decided to make it unwearable by flinging myself down in the gutter […] and cutting the brecches […] also managed to tear the Vandyke collar. Thus […] I also avoided being photographed in that infernal get-up'.[34] In fact, according to Elizabeth Ewing, even Burnett's own son Vivian 'detested it as much as anyone'.[35] Both popularity and loathing spread to America, with John Nicholas Beffel claiming in 1927 in *The Bookman* that this 'vogue' had been a 'plague' and a 'pestilence' that had 'swept the country like a wildfire [upon its publication] and its effects continued for ten years', and having as an effect that 'the soul of many a boy in the nineties was seared' as well as making 'thousands of boys

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[30] Kristen Stewart, 'Little Lord Fauntleroy: The Defense of a Fashion Victim', in Alissa de Witt-Paul and Mira Crouch, eds., *Fashion Forward*, digitised edn. (2010; Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary Press, 2011), pp. 99-109 (p.103). Hereafter referred to as 'Fauntleroy: The Defense of a Fashion Victim'; Anna Wilson, 'Little Lord Fauntleroy: The Darling of Mothers and the Abomination of a Generation', p.235.
[31] J. K. Bangs, 'The Paradise Club', *The Ladies' Home Journal*, XII.7 (1895), p. 6, in Stewart, 'Fauntleroy: The Defense of a Fashion Victim', p. 102.
[32] In Ann Thwaite, *Waiting for the Party: The Life of Frances Hodgson Burnett 1849-1924* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1974).
[33] Darton, *Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life*, p.233.
[34] Compton Mackenzie, *My Life and Times: Octave One, 1883-1891* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1963), p. 92.
[35] Elizabeth Ewing, *History of Children's Costume* (London: Batsford, 1977), p. 92, qtd. in Kiera Vaclavik, 'The Dress of the Book: Children's Literature, Fashion and Fancy Dress', in Bridget Carrington and Jennifer Harding, eds., *Beyond the Book: Transforming Children's Literature*, digitised edn. (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), pp. 62-76.

who were thus humiliated raise […] their voices in rebellion'.[36] Indeed, in 1889 the magazine *Puck* mentioned that 'at present the country is undergoing a very severe attack of Little Lord Fauntleroy', while the *Chicago Tribune* joked in the same year that 'many a little boy […] that goes about tricked out in a little Fauntleroy costume, wishes from the bottom of his aching heart that somebody had told Mrs. Burnett all about those penalties at the right time'.[37]

For all the criticism, the fact remains that the Fauntleroy dress was employed by many parents to give the appearance of belonging to the upper classes. And the use of dress to pretend class-membership in real life suggests that *Fauntleroy* contributed through sartorial images to naturalising the superiority of one class over the others. As already noted, scholarship on Cedric's attire, such as by Anna Wilson and Claudia Nelson, focuses mostly on how dress is employed to engage with gender identity and thus does not give sufficient credit to how dress images are employed in naturalising the concept of inherent and essential nobility, just as in *Little Princess*. Cedric, for instance might be described on the one hand verbally as wearing, just like other boys of his age, 'a short white kilt skirt, and a big white hat' or 'a blue suit and red neck-ribbon' or 'short knickerbockers and red stockings'.[38] On the other, he nonetheless 'look[s] like young lord and even when his 'legs flew up behind his knickerbockers; as he plays, these are 'lordly little red legs'.[39] Again we see the inscription of nobility into the body: Cedric is 'strong, lithe, graceful'; his face is 'manly' and his eyes 'fearless'; as Mr. Havisham, the lawyer, muses upon meeting Cedric, this boy 'ist the best-bred looking […] fellow I ever saw.[40] Furthermore, the pictorial text adds interesting insight into this construction, visualising young Cedric as dressed in much more fancy attire than the verbal text says. Cedric's depiction in the (in)famous Fauntleroy suit was already discussed in Chapter Two through reference to the illustration of his meeting with the Earl, his grandfather (Figure 2.6). Given that by this point in the narrative, Cedric has assumed his aristocratic status, it is only to be expected that he would dress this way. However, it is important to note that Cedric is depicted, as pointed out previously in this chapter, in quite a similar manner even while still living in England and socialising with bootblacks and grocery men. For instance, when Mr. Havisham pays Cedric and his

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[36] John Nicholas Beffel, 'The Fauntleroy Plague', pp. 133-134.
[37] Quotations from 'Cartoons and Comments', *Puck* 25 (6.3.1889), p.1; Elizabeth Ewing, *History of Children's Costume* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977), p. 90; both quoted in Stewart, 'Fauntleroy: The Defense of a Fashion Victim', p.101.
[38] Burnett, *Fauntleroy*, pp. 13-14 & p. 30.
[39] Burnett, *Fauntleroy*, p. 20, p. 28.
[40] Burnett, *Fauntleroy*, p.26-26.

mother the first and very unexpected visit, Cedric is already depicted as wearing a sash around his waist and a collar with lace (Figure 4.2) In Sara's case, lace underwear functioned as a marker of inherent nobility; stressing that this nobility existed within Sara and did not need to be visualised. In this novel, lace functions differently: here it visualises nobility, stressing that regardless of social status and financial possession, a noble character will always shine through. It seems that indeed, in this novel, attire overall functions in a slightly different way. For the soft and frilly material that in Sara's case may have suggested kindness but also naivety and hypocrisy or decadence, expresses in Cedric's case a caring but also responsible individual. As Beverly Lyon Clark puts it, his attire functions as 'a prefiguration of his later status'.[41] Fauntleroy might be a rags-to-riches narrative, but attire certainly clarifies that in terms of identity, there are no metaphorical rags to be found.

In fact, when Cedric is depicted as having 'learned to dress myself many years ago', the suggestion is made that Cedric is also sartorially literate – and this in turn suggests that part of his nobility lies in his awareness of the responsibilities associated with his age, gender and status.[42] Cedric expresses a model of masculinity, the so-called Muscular Christian, made particularly popular by Tom Hughes' *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857) and Kingsley's works, and characterised by a combination of both masculinised and feminised traits, such as physical sturdiness and chivalry as well as benevolence and morality. As Beverly Lyon Clark puts it, Cedric embodies contesting models of masculinity: those of the Christian gentleman, the self-made man, the masculine primitive, and the newly emerging socio-economic elite.[43] And as we will see later in this chapter through the discussion of pocket images, sartorial references are repeatedly employed to visualise the regenerative possibilities of an aristocratic gender identity that combines masculinised and feminised virtues and behaviours. For Cedric, whose inheritance grants 'power for good or evil', chooses to be a 'philanthropist'; and thus assumes, in contrast to his grandfather, the responsibility for the social welfare of others.[44]

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[41] Clark, *Kiddie Lit*, p. 25.
[42] Burnett, *Fauntleroy*, p. 78
[43] Clark, *Kiddie Lit*, p.22-25.
[44] Burnett, *Fauntleroy*, p. 90.

"SO THIS IS LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY."
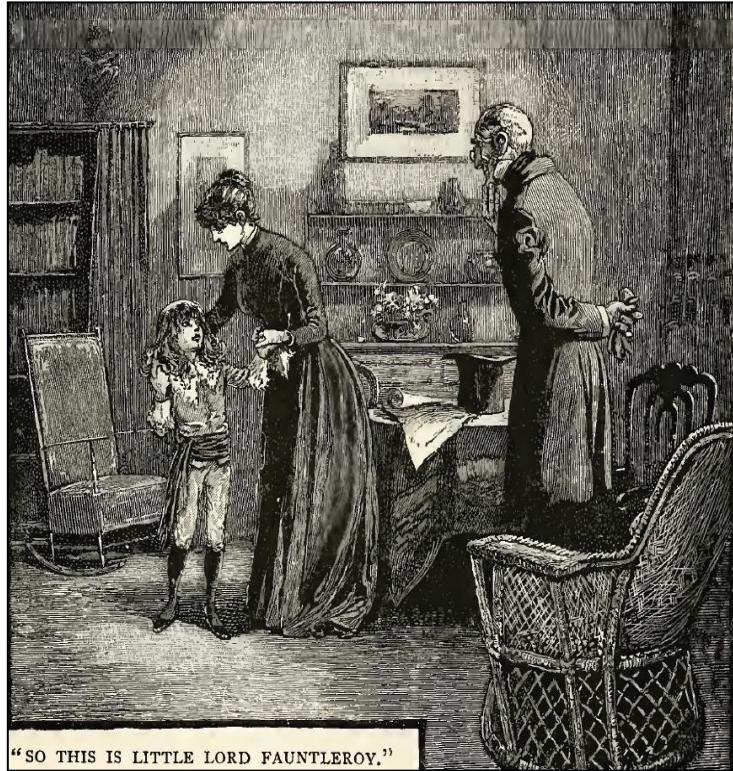
Figure 4.2: Illustration by Reginald Birch, in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1887)

Let us now consider how reference to dress in *Lost Prince* is employed to go beyond addressing the erosion of class structures and instead focuses on the issue of political legitimacy. While I do not want to engage in a reductive reading that views a story as Burnett's personal interpretation of events, the little critics have written about this story does suggest this novel is the product of a multiplicity of historical narratives of Serbian political legitimacy and the idea of a Greater Serbia, woven into one, subsumed within the Loristans' attire. Before Marco ever learns of his true identity and while discussing the possibility of a 'real king' from 'a line of kings' waiting to return to Samavia, The Rat muses whether knowing, 'when no one else knew it […] That you were a king and you ought to be on a throne wearing a crown. I wonder if it would make a chap look different?'[45]

The answer Burnett gives to this rhetorical question is that, even without knowing, such 'a chap' would indeed look 'different'. For even when the Loristans are poor and deprived of their political birthright, they unshakably maintain nobility of character; in the case of Marco, despite also being ignorant of lineage. Of Stefan Loristan we hear that '[n]ot even rags and tatters could have made Loristan seem insignificant or undistinguished', while the addition that '[h]e was always the same' conveys inherentness and inalienability.[46] Marco is similarly described as a 'shabby lad whose very coat was patched', but his meticulous attention to personal hygiene makes people disregard that his 'well-brushed clothes were worn, and there were patches on his shoes' and instead perceive him as 'a young "toff"'.[47] Burnett's use of the discursive poor child of her times to stress inherent nobility is interesting, remembering that, in Chapter Two, we saw how the sartorial representations of the poor child increasingly implied a naturalisation of class difference. Marco resembles this poor child and the written text, indeed, plays upon such sartorial representations. Marco wears patched attire, and since their servant mends 'even shoes sometimes', we can assume he wears patched shoes; since he might even 'not put on his shoes' (albeit in the house), Marco even mimics the barefootedness of the poor child.[48] Yet, for all this raggedness, everyone realises that Marco is by no means one of Barnardo's boys, in need of salvation – rather, he is the one who will bring salvation to a whole nation. We also need, at this point, to consider how the illustrations to the first edition, drawn by Maurice L. Bowers, add to the construction of Marco's class-identity. Let us recall John Leech's illustration 'Substance

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[45] Burnett, *Lost Prince*, p. 49.
[46] Burnett, *Lost Prince*, pp. 109-10.
[47] Burnett, *Lost Prince*, pp. 15, 37.
[48] Burnett, *Lost Prince*, pp. 15, 91.

and Shadow' from 1843, published in *Punch*, which depicted members of the lower and the working classes in a gallery or museum, naturalising them as ragged, inferior and in need of intellectual improvement (Figure 2.28). It is true, these illustrations were published almost 70 years apart and, as we saw in Chapter Two, the sartorial constructions of the child had undergone significant changes. However, we also saw that the association of the poor child and sartorial deprivation appears continued to be employed to express a threat to the *status quo*. Even a cursory comparison of this illustration to Bower's, depicting Marco and his father in a similar environment, reveals just how different the Loristans are constructed (Figure 4.3).

Here, the museum- or exhibition hall-setting has the opposite effect, framing these two characters within an intellectual context and protecting them from associations of intellectual impoverishment. Let us now look at how the dressed body is employed within this environment to convey that natural class-identity shines through in any circumstance. In 'Substance and Shadow', both adults and children are wearing loose-fitting clothes and are barefoot; many have a hunched body-posture, looking either in ignorant awe at a painting or in ignorant indifference away. In contrast, the Loristans' body posture suggests ease within the surroundings, with Stefan Loristan sufficiently versed in the displays to teach Marco, and Marco listening interestedly, in a relaxed position, his arms folded behind his back. Their attire appears much better tended than the written text indicates, and in no way inferior to those of other visitors. In fact, a look at contemporary fashion shows that both father's and son's dress follow contemporary trends.[49]

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[49] Since Burnett permanently relocated to America after 1907, I consulted American fashion plates for contemporary fashions. '1915 Boy's Spring Fashion Clothes Catalog', in *Antique Images*. <http://antiqueimages.blogspot.gr/2012/10/free-mens-fashion-illustration-1915.html>, and 'Fall & Winter – 1916', in *Supplement American Gentleman*, 6, vol. xv (August 1915), *NYPL Digital Gallery*, Image ID 817045. <http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?817045> [both accessed 26.7.2013].
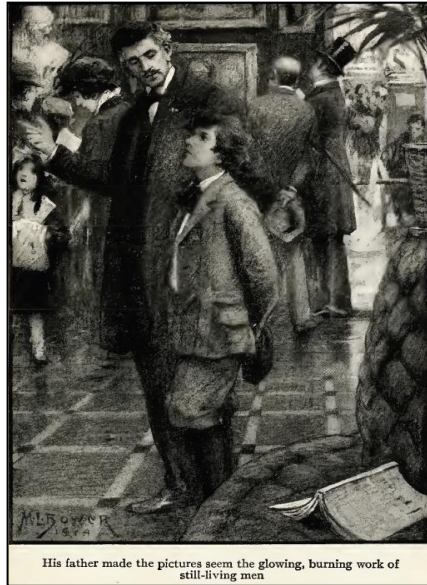
His father made the pictures seem the glowing, burning work of
still-living men

Figure 4.3: Illustration by Maurice L. Bowers, in
Frances Hodgson Burnett's *Lost Prince* (1915)
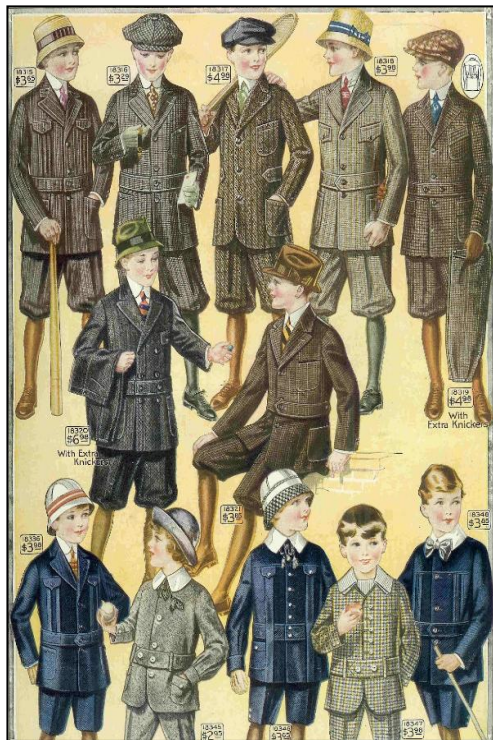
Figure 4.4: '1915 Boy's Spring Fashion 'Clothes
Catalog'

Figure 4.5: 'Fall & Winter – 1916', in *Supplement
American Gentleman* s (1915)

If we compare Marco's attire to that of the boys in the upper row depicted in a contemporary fashion magazine, we will see that his dress is quite similar to the boy on the far-right side: both boys are wearing knickerbockers, a shirt and tie and a jacket with large outside pockets (Figure 4.4). The only difference, in fact, might be that the boy in the fashion magazine is wearing a cap; but then again, Marco is holding a cap in his hands, which indicates he is well-aware of the appropriate dress-code for men when inside a building. Although the father's attire is only partially visible, we can see that Stefan Loristan's wide overcoat reaching the knee, a shirt and tie is quite similar in style to men's attire advertised in 1916 (Figure 4.5).

What also needs to be considered is a fascinating little detail: that both father and son in Bower's illustration are wearing white – a colour laden with class-references, given that limited laundering methods made white a difficult colour to wear for those with limited funds or employed in manual labour.[50] We know that the two are careful to keep clean and that Lazarus provides dress assistance (which presumably included washing clothes). Yet, if we consider that any other colour would be easier to maintain clean, we see that the white shirts might well convey absence of need. We can see that verbal and even more so pictorial dress differentiate father and son even during their poverty, insisting that these two aristocratic individuals do not, within a Foucauldian framework, allow their bodies to be reduced by dominant discourse into a position of inferiority.

Dress images in other words repeatedly add to the construction of class differences. As we will see in the following section, Burnett's stories also perpetuate a discourse that naturalises any disrespect of natural hierarchies as an unnatural, monstrous action.

Non-upper classes and the dress of monstrosity

Indeed, though Burnett herself improved her social position, turning from the daughter of an ironmonger and businessman into a successful author with international fame, and was exposed to American democratic ideals, her stories do not deal kindly with individuals who, in their quest to improve their own status, threaten that of the upper classes. Once again, we need to recognise how subtly, but also inconsistently, dress

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[50] Cele C. Otnes and Elizabeth Pleck, *Cinderella Dreams: The Allure of the Lavish Wedding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p. 31.

images function to disparage those non-upper-class members who attack class identity and attempt to disrupt boundaries. As we will see, images of the dressed and undressed body visualise – quite paradoxically, given the supposed inherentness of identity – that the fate of such individuals is to lose their human identity. Burnett's stories thus echo late-Victorian discourses on society, women, the poor, and the masses; discourses which employed the rhetoric of degeneration, even if for different purposes and with different outcomes. As Daniel Pick argues, '[d]egeneration was never successfully reduced to a fixed axiom or theory in the nineteenth century […] Rather it was a shifting term produced, inflected, refined and re-constituted in the movement between human sciences, fictional narratives and socio-political commentaries'.[51] Burnett's stories indeed, through dress images, play with these narratives, suggesting associations between class-transgression and degeneration by referencing theories such as atavism, which perceived a return to a more primitive existence or earlier stage of evolution, and Social Darwinism, which championed the importance of heredity.[52] Using Darwin's theory of the survival of the fittest, Social Darwinists, such as sociologist and philosopher Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), posited that in society, just as in nature, there was a struggle for survival, with human behaviour governed by heredity, race, and environment instead of, as posited by positivism, by deliberate and rational choice; and according to this theory, the social elite that possessed wealth and power was also naturally superior to those lacking wealth and power.[53] The possibility that the unconscious might be governing human actions, suggested for instance by William James in *Principles of Psychology* (1890) and in Sigmund Freud's studies, alarmed the rational Victorians – for unconsciousness also implied inability to control it. Works such as Max Nordau's *Degeneration* (1892) furthermore championed the concept that evolution might lead to decadence, with the least 'fit' not only surviving, but also wreaking havoc on society's health. A caveat, however: I am not claiming that dress images indicate that Burnett supported Social Darwinism or Atavism; rather, I draw attention to how an exploration of dress images reveals that, in her texts, Burnett plays with newly emerging psychological and sociological theories. Perfect examples are

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[51] Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c. 1848-1918*, p. 7.
[52] For more on social Darwinism, see for instance Zeev Sternhell, 'Crisis of *Fin-de-siècle* Thought', in *International Fascism: Theories, Causes and the New Consensus*, ed. Roger Griffin (London: Arnold, 1989), pp. 169-74 (p. 171); for more on Atavism, see for instance Stephen Arata, *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin de Siècle: Identity and Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 1-10; Cynthia Eagle Russetti, *Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood* (1989; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 1-15.
[53] Sternhell, 'Crisis of *Fin-de-siècle* Thought', p. 171.

Miss Minchin in *Little Princess*, Minna, the mother of the illegitimate claimant to Cedric's title in *Fauntleroy,* as well as 'The 'Lovely Person' in *Lost Prince.*

Let us begin with Minna, a character that conflates class- with gender-rhetoric in Burnett's construction of the unnaturality of questioning upper-class superiority. As long as Minna accepts her station, she is portrayed as a rational being, as 'a daisy-lookin' gal [...] when she was dressed up 'n' not mad'.[54] Things go horribly wrong for Minna, however, once she begins to desire to write, in a Giddensian sense, her self-identity – for, it appears, the only way to do so for her is by threatening Cedric's narrative. The image of Minna's 'show[ing] someone a clean pair of heels' when she abandons her hard-working husband for a supposedly better future can be said to contain the idiomatic meaning of heels 'as the hindmost parts displayed by a fugitive; hence as the means of flight'.[55] Minna's attempt to leave her life behind, to write her own narrative, becomes associated with an irresponsible, even unnatural attempt to escape – since her captor is her family. The word 'heel', furthermore, brings to mind the expression 'Achilles' heel', suggesting that Minna's quest for (illegitimate) upward social mobility is a weakness of character that will cause her downfall. Read in tandem with contemporary socio-political discourses such as Social Darwinism, social mobility is constructed as biologically impossible. Even the servants of Dorincourt claim Minna is 'no lady [...] No gentleman in livery 'u'd bemean hisself to be guv orders by'.[56] This last sentence would be humorous if it did not play upon an unsettling rhetoric that perpetuates beliefs in inherent class differences. First, there is the servants' acceptance of hierarchies being natural. Second, there is the suggestion that the acceptance of hierarchies is something to be rewarded by a slight social improvement, with servants being allowed to call themselves 'gentlemen'. For instance, upper-class servants at the time assumed themselves superior to others of the same class who did inferior work and maintained self-respect by priding themselves in their master's property and status; the price for this was having to be at the 'disposal of the master, to obey his personal authority'.[57] Burnett's fashioning of Minna's body in animalistic terms as 'a hefty 'un [...] a regular tiger-cat' who 'hit the baby – cut its chin' makes it hard not to think of contemporary fears that cultural decline was caused by a disregard of middle-class

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[54] Burnett, *Fauntleroy*, p. 146.
[55] Burnett, *Fauntleroy*, p. 146, 'heel, n.', *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., 1989. *OED Online*, Oxford University Press.
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/85431?redirectedFrom=heels#contentWrapper> [accessed 8.11.2012].
[56] Burnett, *Fauntleroy*, p. 141.
[57] Leonore Davidoff, *Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender & Class* (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 22-26. Henceforward referred to as *Worlds Between* in footnotes.

norms, such as domesticity, motherhood, and female sexual purity.[58] It also echoes atavistic theories of a return to a more primitive status - not as later championed by avant-garde circles as escape from a dying culture, but as a return to a lower and thus inferior, evolutionary stage.[59] Minna's (misguided) self-narrative becomes a narration of degeneration, depriving her of her feminised maternal instincts and suggesting that, since it involves injury of an innocent child, it also injures future society.

Burnett's class-allegiance becomes even more visible through the sartorial references surrounding Miss Minchin, which again play with post-Darwinian rhetoric and ideas of Social Darwinism. It is true, Miss Minchin is, in a sense, a stock character, the heartless headmistress who makes life difficult for the kind protagonist; but in this story, she is transformed into a sadistic, irrational woman in her attempts to remove all remaining vestiges of Sara's upper-class identity. While no information is provided about Miss Minchin's appearance besides that she is 'tall and dull, and respectable and ugly', her malevolent character seems to be mirrored in the appearance of the boarding house, which 'was respectable […], but everything in it was ugly; and the very armchairs seemed to have hard bones in them […] Everything was hard and polished'.[60] For just as the house only appears to be respectable, so does Miss Minchin. Sartorial references repeatedly express her attempts to visualise Sara's loss of status. To understand the difference between Miss Minchin and other headmistresses of Victorian times in authorial engagement with the erosion of the class-system, let us look at the sartorial construction of one of Miss Minchin's literary predecessors: Mrs. Dangerfield, in Dinah Mulock Craik's *The Little Lychetts* (1855). This is another story of a rich and spoiled girl who, after being orphaned and impoverished, succeeds in improving her character and finding happiness. Mrs. Dangerfield is the business-orientated boarding school headmistress who has no compunction to suggest Eunice Lychett prepare for a governess-career following the loss of parents and fortune. However, even a brief look at Mrs. Dangerfield's apparel shows that this character is constructed as less wicked than her name suggests. Certainly, when Mrs. Dangerfield is described as 'bland and demure, not a fold in her dress', the reader cannot but feel her dress mirrors a lack of emotional complexity, resulting in a character devoid of sufficient empathy to at least grant the little girl a period for mourning.[61] However, in a Giddensian framework, she

[58] Burnett, *Fauntleroy*, p. 146.
[59] Marilynn Strasser Olson, *Children's Culture and the Avant-Garde: Painting in Paris, 1890-1915* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 8.
[60] Burnett, *Little Princess*, p. 10.
[61] Dinah Mulock Craik, *The Little Lychetts*, *and Other Stories*, digitised edn. (1855; New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1866), p. 10 .

differs from Miss Minchin in one crucial aspect: she does not seek to write a self-narration based on the disruption of someone else's identity that is ensured by traditions and established hierarchies. Craik's depiction of Mrs. Dangerfield conveys a similar attitude toward class-structures as Burnett, but by sending young Eunice away from the boarding school on her journey to self-discovery and not having Mrs. Dangerfield exploit the girl, Craik refrains from demonising this character. Contemporary readers would probably consider Mrs. Dangerfield's suggestion that Eunice become a governess a reasonable one, given that such employment was considered respectable for young women who needed to support themselves. In contrast, Miss Minchin's behaviour seems to be governed by irrationality. She seems, for instance, intent on annihilating established class structures when she insists that Sara don her 'oldest and plainest clothes – your extravagant ones are no longer suited to your station' and schemes to ensure the permanence of this class-removal by planning for an older Sara attire that 'would be sure to be plain and ugly and to make her look somehow like a servant'.[62] Furthermore, when she obliges Sara to exchange her 'frock the color of a rose' with a black one, and forbids her to wear 'a wreath' made of 'real buds', it is difficult to ignore the associations with an unnaturally early death – and thus the infliction of pain and suffering.[63] Indeed, the flower images bring to mind violation of freshness and abuse of youthful innocence, while the blackness suggests death and destruction of this innocence. Sartorial images ultimately turn Miss Minchin into the figurative (and somewhat frenzied) grim reaper in the episode where she discovers Sara's secret attic-party. Through the 'wreath of flowers' from 'an old summer hat' as 'garlands', Sara associates herself with Roman kings and victorious Ancient Greek athletes. However, Miss Minchin destroys this wreath in a furious rage, and the 'scraps of red and white paper, and discarded artificial flowers all scattered on the floor' bring to mind a scene of battle and death.[64] In fact, one wonders how exactly her cruelty might factor into a reflective writing of a self-narration, given that Miss Minchin will not truly profit from Sara's misery. Miss Minchin's narration of self, the one that does not accept the validity of prewritten identities, cannot but leave the reader angered – and it is difficult to deny that as Miss Minchin questions hierarchies, Burnett's story resonates with contemporary fears of cultural decline and naturalises boundaries to protect social harmony.

In *Lost Prince*, attire donned to assume illegitimately upper-class social identity even more uncompromisingly describes the wearers and thus usurpers as utterly wicked.

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[62] Burnett, *Little Princess*, pp. 80, 124.
[63] Burnett, *Little Princess*, pp. 72, 47.
[64] Burnett, *Little Princess*, pp. 169-71.

An exploration of dress images uncovers images of atavism and degeneration, even Gothic rhetoric of the monstrous body and associated criminal nature. The 'Lovely Person' who kidnaps Marco and becomes a threat to his life, in the attempt to prevent the restoration of the lawful king, is a beautiful and well-dressed young lady, 'wearing an elegant though quiet dress, and a hat which looked as if it had been bought in Paris or Vienna'.[65] Her real social identity is never mentioned, but we learn she is a Russian spy. When Stefan Loristan states that he has 'never heard' her name and that 'men and women of *their class* will use desperate means to gain their end', the suggestion is made she is of a class he considers inferior.[66] Class-rhetoric, tainted with a racial twist given her Russian nationality, again mingles with gender rhetoric, with the 'Lovely Lady' being constructed into a dangerous seductress, even a monster. Once again, we see a shoe image – and this time, we see the *Cinderella* reference functioning in a much more complex and unsettling manner than in *Little Princess*. The 'Lovely Lady', trying to prevent Loristan's return to power, lures Marco into the house and removes her shoe, pretending to have sprained her foot. Reading this *Cinderella* reference through Giddens' theory, we can say that now, Burnett associates the writing of a self-narrative not only with transgression and violence, but also with sexual impurity and deviousness. In true *Cinderella*-style, the shoe-removal initially seems to confirm her identity as noble since a 'slender and delicate foot in a silk stocking' is revealed.[67] However, the shoe image then establishes her as a dangerous temptress.

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[65] Burnett, *Lost Prince*, p. 160.
[66] Burnett, *Lost Prince*, p. 205. Italics mine.
[67] Burnett, *Lost Prince*, p. 164.
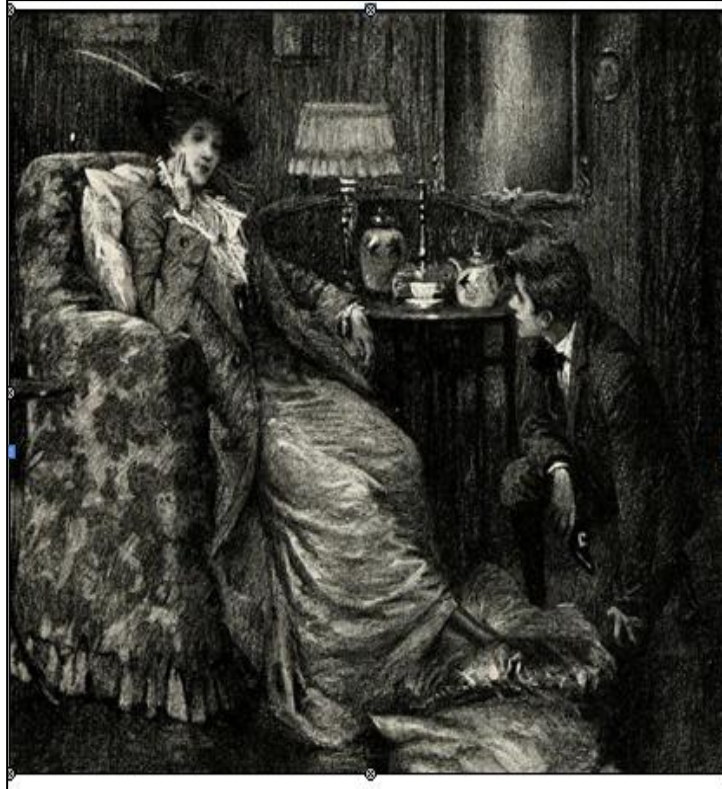
Figure 4.6: Illustration by Maurice L. Bowers, in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *Lost Prince* (1915)

Bower's illustration creates an erotic image, depicting Marco kneeling in front of a beautiful young woman in an almost provocative posture. Her upper body is laid back, the left arm rests on the armchair, and the right hand touches her cheek, her coat is thrown open and reveals her dress and lower body, while the placement of her leg on a pillow exposes her slender foot (Figure 4.6). The similarly quite erotic written depiction of this removal of the shoe suggests a treacherous seduction of a young boy by an older woman who excites by touching herself:

> May I help you?" Marco asked, and he kneeled down again and carefully unfastened her shoe and withdrew it from her foot [...] She bent and gently touched and rubbed it.[68]

However, here is the twist to the Cinderella story: Marco removes the shoe, he does not place it on Cinderella's foot, as did Prince Charming. Class-structures once again emerge as impenetrable, for the 'Lovely Lady' is not Cinderella, and does not have her noble identity. Rather, she is similar to the stepsisters who could not wear the slipper for long. At this instance, it is also helpful to examine the monster-image applied to her after her exposure and figurative removal of her assumed cover. Once identified as a spy, she becomes 'so white, that under the brilliant electric light she was almost green and scarcely looked lovely at all'.[69] The 'Lovely Lady' here reminds one of the monster of Gothic fiction, her nationality making her foreign, different, her appearance and body expressing a corrupt character and deviant sexuality.[70] The monster-image in fact evokes the 'loathly lady' motif of Celtic and German mythology and medieval literature, with Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Wife of Bath's Tale* being one of the best-known examples. However, while Burnett employs it traditionally, to stress the deceptiveness of appearances, she reverses what appearance and what reality are. In Celtic and Germanic tradition, and in *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, this loathly lady is a woman who appears to be ugly, but once she is kissed, touched or married, a spell is broken and she transforms into a beautiful woman. Unlike the traditional 'loathly lady', Burnett's 'Lovely Lady' is only on the surface beautiful – it is beneath the clothes that she hides a foreign and monstrous character. Furthermore, while even rape may be atoned for by the knight in *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, class transgression in *Lost Prince* is

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[68] Burnett, *Lost Prince*, p. 164.
[69] Burnett, *Lost Prince*, p. 248.
[70] Judith Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (1995; Durham, N. C. Duke University Press, 2000), pp. 1-28 (pp. 3-4).

punished: the 'Lovely Lady' is banished into non-importance and non-existence as far as the story is concerned, leaving 'no sight of her violet draperies to be seen'.[71] As we can see, images of dress are closely involved in constructing these three women who do not accept their so-called place in society as not only morally corrupt but also as sadistic, even monstrous. Yet, as we will see in the next section, images of dress also reveal that Burnett's stories are more complex than that – for even if they do not endorse a self-determination that transcends established boundaries and hierarchies, they do encourage self-determination within these boundaries.

Dress and the progressive Burnett

Yes, dress images reveal that these stories do more than merely praise the upper and aristocratic classes and denigrate all others. Looking beneath the surface of clothes in Burnett's novels – metaphorically speaking, of course – reveals that her texts pry beneath the external covering of the *status quo*, constructing a complex social identity that challenges dominant discourses which sought to associate intellectual and emotional skills with particular classes. This section will show, by exploring sartorial references, how Burnett's stories, paradoxically, also disrupt dominant discourse and thus shed doubt on contemporary theories of Social Darwinism, atavism and degeneration. I will first discuss how Burnett, to some extent, challenges the supposed inherent nobility that class-discourse attributed to the upper classes through her sartorial construction of Sara and Mary. A discussion of the sartorial construction of two characters from the lower and working classes, Becky and Dick, will then show that Burnett *does* acknowledge a noble character is not the privilege of the upper classes. Finally, we will explore how Sara and Cedric's sartorial constructions result in a paradoxical proposal – given Burnett's believe in an inherent social identity – that identity may be too fluid to contain.

Upper classes and the dress of decay

Let us once again begin with Sara, given the suggestion was already made in the beginning of this chapter that she is not that noble, despite her kindness. In fact, Miss

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[71] Burnett, *Lost Prince*, p. 248.

Minchin's jealous description of Sara's clothes as 'perfectly ridiculous […] She has been provided for as if she were a little princess' might not be all that wrong.[72] As we will see through the example not only of Sara but also spoiled Mary in *Secret Garden*, Burnett's allegiance to the upper-classes does not prevent her from conveying that their members may make mistakes, such as overstepping boundaries imposed by both age and good taste, with potentially catastrophic consequences. Burnett, however, does not criticise the disregard of the *noblesse oblige* principle by employing, as did many other writers, images that disparaged those not belonging to the upper classes, but by playing upon gender expectations. To explain further, let me briefly return to dress images in Craik's *Little Lychetts*.

Eunice Lychett, just as Sara, is portrayed as too fond of dress and less emotionally mature, something which initially suggests that Eunice might have offered the inspiration for immature Sara. Eunice wears 'handsome, over-womanly dresses', and upon being told she will finally meet the parents she last saw as a baby, she asks herself '[h]ow should I make the best of myself, so as to appear before them', before considering 'how little they would care what dress I had on'.[73] Yet, Burnett's construction of Sara differs from that of Eunice. Both girls may not have yet understood the responsibilities associated with their class and age, but Eunice's negative portrayal is continued by disassociating her from the supposedly upper-class traits of beauty and grace. When Eunice complains, for instance, that '[n]othing could impart to my appearance […] "refinement"', the reason is her possession of non-upper-class features, such as being 'large-boned, large-faced, large-handed'.[74] If we recall that female membership to the upper classes was associated with possessing a slender physique, we detect that Craik employs derogatory stereotypes about the non-upper classes to criticise inappropriate behaviour by members of the upper classes. In *Little Princess*, in contrast, such references to class are absent, and instead, we witness an association between social inappropriateness and gender. This story parallels Sara's age-inappropriate and exaggerated feminine appearance, through the use of a doll-reference, to a loss of feminised abilities of nurture – thus adding to the traditional representation of women as mothers and home-makers. Sara's mistake is pointed out early in the story, through Lavinia's spitefully that '[m]y mamma says that children should be dressed simply'.[75] It would be easy to excuse such a *faux pas* given Sara's circumstances - her father,

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[72] Burnett, *Little Princess*, pp. 16-17.
[73] Craik, *Lychetts*, pp. 10, 15.
[74] Craik, *Lychetts*, p. 10.
[75] Burnett, *Little Princess*, p. 18.

Captain Crewe helped Sara build 'a wardrobe much too grand for a child of seven' acted most probably out of ignorance to help Sara deal with maternal loss, and Sara coped with emotional pain through immersion in material possessions.[76] Yet, Burnett repeatedly using dress images to remind the reader of Sara's sartorial transgression and to emphasise that even upper-class identity does not exempt from following established codes. The suggestion that Sara goes 'beyond her age' is also reflected early on in the story through Ethel Franklin Betts' illustration of Sara before entering the Seminary (Figure 4.7).[77]

In this illustration, a very young girl is depicted in front of the window of a toy-shop, with a man standing next to her, slightly bent towards her, while in the background, a woman is approaching. The girl is wearing a red coat with fur lining on the collar, a matching fur muff and bonnet with matching fur top. Although the illustration initially appears innocent, careful analysis of dress exposes many less overt indications of criticism. For instance, sartorial transgression is expressed through the depiction of a mature woman approaching who is dressed in quite a similar manner, but in more subdued colours. Comparing the two female figures suggests that Sara, with her fur-lined coat, whose red colour brings to mind passion and sexuality, is socially inappropriate, transgressing the boundaries of childhood and stepping into womanhood. Furthermore, comparing Sara's apparel with fashionable dress from the period shows that Sara is too fancifully dressed (Figures 4.8 and 4.9).[78] As we already saw in Chapter Two, at the beginning of the twentieth century, children wore more simple attire. Such attire called for lighter fabrics such as silk and muslin as well as more pastel colours; as we can see if we look at Figure 4.8, coats were shorter and tighter, and hats were either not worn or were smaller. It is true, Sara's coat tends more toward the 1906-fashion in length, but its A-shape conveys adherence to 1902-fashions, while the fur trimmings evoke even earlier periods (Figure 4.9).

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[76] Burnett, *Little Princess*, p. 13.

[77] All illustrations of *Little Princess* referred to in the text are by Ethel Franklin Betts, in Frances Hodgson Burnett, *A Little Princess: Being The Whole Story of Sara Crewe Now Told For The First Time*, digitised edn. (1905; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1917). <http://ia310809.us.archive.org/3/items/littleprincessbe00burn/littleprincessbe00burn.pdf> [accessed 17.1.2009].

[78] For further examples see for instance *Children's Fashions 1900-1950 As Pictured in Sears Catalogs*, ed. JoAnne Olian (New York: Dover Publications, 2003).

Figure 4.7: Illustration by Ethel Franklin Betts, in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *Little Princess* (1905)
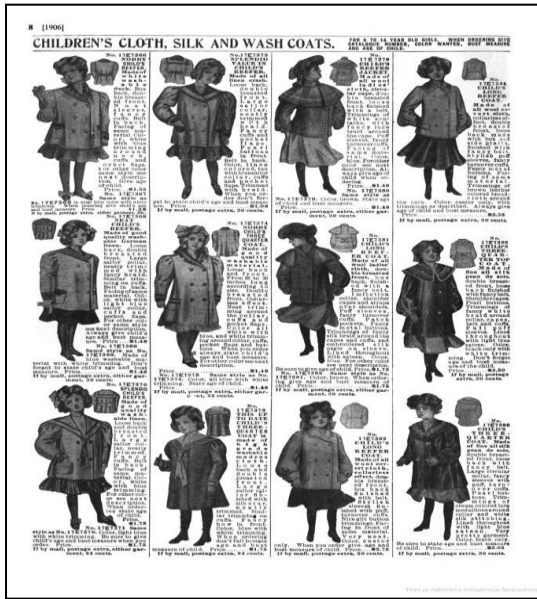
Figure 4.8: Advertisement for 'Children's Cloth, Silk and Wash Coats' (1906)**,** in *Children's Fashions 1900-1950*, p. 8

Figure 4.9: Advertisement for 'Girl's Long Coats or Automobile Jackets' (1902), in *Children's Fashions 1900-1950*, p. 2

Sara's disregard of fashion rules also becomes apparent if we consider Isabel A. Mallon's fashion advice expressed in 'Dressing Our Little Women', written as early as 1893:

> Beautiful materials may be used for her […] I do not necessarily mean very expensive ones, but I do mean that the fashionable coarse laces, the broad sashes, and if her mother fancies it, a coat of rich bengaline, are permissible on the small lady whose years are not many […] occasionally one sees a toilette made of old rose or of the fanciest shade of yellow. However, this, of course, is the gown selected for a festivity, and not the one preferred for general wear […] a coat of the same material with very wide Empire revers, faced usually with a bright color, while her hat is a large felt one, trimmed with rosettes, wings, or if she is a very careful little girl, feathers.[79]

As we can see, even 12 years before *Little Princess* was published, elaborate attire may was permissible for a young girl for festive occasions, if not for daily use. Sara, however, is depicted as donning a bright red coat and a hat, both trimmed with fur when going shopping. This trimming should also remind us of the previously-discussed ermine and sable references that visualised Sara's aristocratic identity. Seen in the context of overdressing, however, these references might also play upon contemporary perceptions of the bygone aristocracy having enjoyed a life of privilege at the expense of the lower classes. Add to that the depiction of Sara and her father as standing in the shadows, while the female figure is portrayed as walking in the light – as, indeed, young Sara appears to be drawn into darkness. In fact, Sara's gaze towards the inanimate dolls suggests Sara is in danger of turning away from light and real life, where real people struggle to survive, toward a world of artifice. Captain Crewe's failure to protect Sara from such peril is expressed when he looks at Sara sleeping next to her new doll later on:

> Her black hair was spread out on the pillow and Emily's golden-brown hair mingled with it, both of them had lace-ruffled night-gowns, and both had long eyelashes which lay and curled up on their cheeks. Emily looked so like a real child.[80]

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[79] Isabel A. Mallon, 'Dressing Our Little Women', *The Ladies's Home Journal*, 10.10 (September 1893), p. 25. <http://www.costumegallery.com/LHJ/Sept_1893/Girls/p25dress.htm> [accessed 10.7.2012].
[80] Burnett, *Little Princess*, p. 15.

What Captain Crewe fails to realise is that if Emily looks so 'real', then Sara is also doll-like – and this disassociation from reality is the fault of a father who seems to have placed too much emphasis on appearances and luxuries, and too little emphasis on the importance of involvement with reality instead of only dolls and fantasy tales.

The reference to this doll, in fact, requires careful attention as it provides a rich subtext – especially if compared to the different, and much less extensive, treatment of Emily in the original version of *Little Princess*, the novella *Sara Crewe: Or, What Happened at Miss Minchin's*, published in the popular children's magazine, *St. Nicholas* (December 1887 to February 1888). Burnett herself drew attention to the importance of dolls in a child's life in her fictionalised autobiography *The One I Knew the Best of All: A Memory of the Mind of a Child* (1893). As she admits, as a child she had 'an ability to "pretend" ardently', which 'was her consolation and support'.[81] At one time, for instance, she transformed her brother's black gutta-percha dolls into 'Topsy', the non-baptised, mischievous and mistreated slave girl in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) and, pretending to be Tom's master, the cruel plantation owner Simon Legree, she whipped the doll. Particularly interesting is Burnett's contention that 'all children possess this right of entry into the fairyland, where *anything* can be "pretended" […] If one could follow them in the "pretendings," one would make many discoveries about them'.[82]

So, what might Sara's 'pretending' tell us? Reading Emily in light of contemporary discourse on dolls, which employed dolls to essentialise the gendered role of mother and nurturer, allows us to perceive the more intricate meaning constructed through Sara's engagement with Emily and her attire. Dressing and undressing dolls offered (and still offers) little girls endless opportunities to experience intense emotions of love and protection, but also anger and hate. In the 1890s, with discourses on maternal instincts raging, girls were encouraged to play with dolls as it was believed such games would develop maternity; they did so up to the age of 13 to 14.[83] In

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[81] Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The One I Knew the Best of All: A Memory of the Mind of a Child* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893), pp. 55-58 (p. 58). Hereafter referred to in footnotes as *The One I Knew the Best of All*.

[82] Burnett, *The One I Knew the Best of All*, p. 58.

[83] For more on the meaning of dolls, see for instance Keiko Tanaka, 'The Representation of Girls and Doll-Playing in Literature'. Pdf-version of conference paper,' Session 3: Imaginary Play', *Play A Making Sense of: Project*, 2nd Global Conference 22.7-24.7.2013, Mansfield College, Oxford, found at *INTER-DISCIPLINARY.NET*.
<http://www.inter-disciplinary.net/probing-the-boundaries/making-sense-of/play/project-archives/conference-programme-abstracts-and-papers/session-3-imaginary-play/> [accessed 11.7.2013]. Tanaka is here referring to a study on dolls, conducted in 1897 by Granville Stanley Hall and Alexander

literature of the time, playing with dolls was constructed as a potent emotional need, even inspiring girls who did not have a doll to dress and care for inanimate objects.[84] For instance, in Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* (1862), we see this need constructed as making orphaned Cosette transfer her emotions to a sword; in Sara Chauncey Woolsey's *What Katy Did* (1872), a work that influenced Burnett's *Secret Garden*, we see Johnnie (Joanna), the sister of the eponymous heroine Katy Carr, pretend her 'little yellow chair' is a doll.[85] In *Little Women* (two volumes, 1868 and 1869 respectively), Louisa May Alcott, whom Burnett had met in 1887, conveyed the characters of the four March sisters – Meg, Amy, Beth and Jo - through their treatment of dolls.[86]

In Burnett's novella, as in the novel, Emily illustrates Sara's gradual maturation, from an imaginative child to a responsible girl. What differs between the two versions is that in the novella, little is said about Emily's acquisition and appearance other than that the father (not Sara) chooses her and that she is dressed 'as grandly as' Sara – and that Sara does 'not touch the doll' initially, after she enters the seminary at the age of eight.[87] After her father dies, however, when she is about 11, Sara refuses to obey Miss Minchin's order to 'put that doll down' as she sees the doll connecting her to her father.[88] When Sara is about 12, she realises Emily is 'nothing but a doll' and transfers her emotions to Ermengarde, who, according to Sara, is 'a little like Emily.'[89] In fact, Sara's gradual frustration with Emily anticipates Granville Stanley Hall's and Alexander Caswell Ellis' findings of a study on dolls, conducted in 1897 and published in *A Study of Dolls* (1897) that when adolescence sets in, 'girls realise more distinctly than before that dolls have absolutely no inner life or feeling.'[90]

The novel, in contrast, provides extensive detail about Emily before Sara's maturation – and this detail is what makes Burnett's references to dolls in the novel so fascinating. As soon as Emily is bought, we witness a parroting of contemporary gender

Caswell Ellis, 'Study of Dolls,' *Pedagogical Seminary*, 1.2 (Dec.1896), pp. 133-34, in 'The Representation of Girls and Doll-Playing In Literature', p. 2.

[84] Tanaka, 'The Representation of Girls and Doll-Playing in Literature', p. 2.

[85] Tanaka, 'The Representation of Girls and Doll-Playing in Literature', p. 2; Sara Chauncey Woolsey, *What Katy Did*, digitised edn. (1872; Suffolk: Clay and Sons, 1918), p. 51. Woolsey wrote under the pen-name Susan Coolidge. For details on Burnett being influenced by *What Katy Did*, see Gerard Cheshire, 'Life & Times', in Sara Chauncey Woolsey, *What Katy Did Next* (1889; Falkirk, Stirlingshire: HarperCollins Classics, 2013), pp. i-vx (pp. v-vi).

[86] Tanaka, 'The Representation of Girls and Doll-Playing In Literature', p. 6.

[87] Frances Hodgson Burnett, *Sara Crewe: Or, What Happened at Miss Minchin's*, in *Sara Crewe: Little Saint Elizabeth and Other Stories*, digitised edn. (1887-1888; New York: Charles Scribner, 1897), pp. 1-84 (p. 5). Hereafter referred to as *Sara Crewe* in text and footnotes.

[88] Burnett, *Sara Crewe*, p. 18.

[89] Burnett, *Sara Crewe*, pp. 8, 18, 24.

[90] Hall and Ellis, 'Study of Dolls', pp. 133-34.

rhetoric, with Emily 'taken to a children's outfitter shop, and measured for a wardrobe as grand as Sara's own', since Sara wants her to 'look as if she was a child with a good mother […] I'm her mother'.[91] Indeed, in this context, it is quite chilling when Miss Minchin wants Sara to give her the 'Last Doll', which Sara received from her father before his death on her eleventh birthday, since '[e]verything you own is mine'.[92] In this instance, Miss Minchin clearly (and we can assume knowingly) disrespects Sara's symbolic motherhood and, metaphorically, commits infanticide. However, this doll means little to Sara, in contrast to Emily, whom she adores. As in the novella, she cares for her lovingly, even believes she 'can read and talk and walk' in secret – but at no point does she compare the doll to Ermengarde, as Sara does in the novella.[93] Indeed, in this story we see Sara, while still rich, employing Emily to encourage other little girls to develop their nurturing qualities: she encourages Ermengarde and other girls to nurture Emily and tells Lottie, for instance, 'I will be your mamma […] And Emily shall be your sister.[94] This use of the doll as a tool for preparing girls for their future role in society is also apparent in one illustration, where we see Sara having assumed a motherly role, serving tea to other, apparently younger, girls and another girl, possibly Lottie, cradling Emily in her arms (Figure 4.10).

As in the novella, Sara becomes frustrated with the doll's lifelessness at some point and casts her aside – but one should wonder what inspired Burnett to focus so much more on Emily, before Sara's banishment to the attic, in the novel. Possibly, Hall's and Ellis' *A Study of Dolls* placed the importance of dolls in a child's socialisation process into the spotlight. If so, Emily might be yet another way Burnett subversively visualises Sara's socialisation process up to that point as being unnatural. Certainly, Sara is a sweet girl who cares about others and who does seem aware of her social surroundings – but we need now to understand how Burnett repeatedly emphasises Sara's disregard of sartorial and social rules of modesty as well as the potential threat of corruption of character, through interplay of sartorial images and references to Emily.

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[91] Burnett, *Little Princess*, p. 15.
[92] Burnett, *Little Princess*, p. 80.
[93] Burnett, *Little Princess*, p. 19.
[94] Burnett, *Little Princess*, pp. 19, 41.

Figure 4.10: Illustration by Ethel Franklin Betts, in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *Little Princess* (1905)

As already mentioned, Emily is Sara's metaphorical baby. Emily, as with Sara, has both luxurious attire and 'beautiful lace-trimmed underclothes'.[95] Emily, in other words, is Sara's mirror image, reflecting all the wrongs a parent can do to a child – and suggesting, by evoking maternal associations, that such wrongs impact the future as well. When Miss Amelia Minchin talks about 'real' Valenciennes lace, she might be associating Sara with the despotic aristocracy of the French court and vocalising Sara's ignorance of the stark social reality of lace-production until the advent of machine-production in the 1900s. For this Valenciennes lace was divided into *vrai* and *fausse*, or true and false, respectively. *Vrai* was produced by 3000-4000 working-class women living in Valenciennes for the upper classes, and was considered superior owing to its production in underground cellars and associated dampness; these women were in conflict with the many more women living outside Valenciennnes who produced the *fausse* lace that was considered inferior owing to the lack of humid atmosphere. Add to that, in either case, the production of this lace was costly and time-consuming compared to other lace, obliging workers to work many hours a day, for many months, just to produce one dress item, such as a pair of men's ruffles.[96]

Sara, in other words, is associated with both ignorance and exploitation, not unlike Queen Marie Antoinette of France, Sara's idol. Through this association, the potential for loss of physical body is conveyed – for Marie Antoinette saw first her 'grand' gowns being removed and then her life.[97] The novel may suggest that social identity is fixed– but sartorially, the suggestion is also made that a neglect of gender, class and age responsibilities is disastrous. Under the reign of Marie Antoinette's husband, Louis XVI, the French people suffered immensely; their situation was exacerbated by her own disregard of their plight. If we now recall Emily's role in Sara's socialisation process and Sara's use of Emily in the socialisation process of other girls, we will realise that this doll adds intricate meaning to the novel. Once Sara, deprived of clothes and marginalised to the attic, realises that Emily cannot be human, despite all her fine clothing, she herself marginalises Emily to a secondary position. Sara's enforced loss of attire thus becomes a portent of her realisation of the dangers of vanity and thus her salvation. Ragged Sara for instance acknowledges the significance of moderation of both dress and character when she exclaims that Marie Antoinette was 'a

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[95] Burnett, *Little Princess*, pp.15, 17.
[96] Information on Valenciennes lace: 'Valenciennes Lace History', *A Lace Lover's Diary*.
[97] Burnett, Little Princess, p. 124.

great deal more like a queen than when she was so gay and everything was so grand'.[98] Thus, when Sara is also required to learn to 'mend' clothes', we realise she has acquired 'literacy in fabrics'.[99] This literacy, in turn, allows her to understand her responsibilities of gender, age and class – and thus not become a second Marie Antoinette.

The suggestion that ignoring the dictum *noblesse oblige* is so condemnable it can lead to loss of bodily existence is again expressed sartorially in *Secret Garden*. Young Mary Lennox differs from Sara in that she is not only spoiled but completely egotistical. Once again, responsibility is associated with failure to provide appropriate parental guidance, but unlike Mr. Crewe, Mrs. Lennox acts out of egoism and not love. Mary's mother, an upper-class representative of the British empire in India, shows disregard for her maternal responsibilities, with her 'thin and floating' dresses expressing the flimsy character of a mother who hands over the child care to an Ayah so she can enjoy socializing and flirting with other men.[100] On the day Mrs. Lennox is infected with cholera, having disregarded the warnings so she can attend a party, she is described as 'fuller of lace than ever'.[101] In fact, we see that once again, Burnett draws on existing character-stereotypes for Mrs. Lennox, this time on Mrs. Vandaleur, the wife of captain Vandaleur, stationed in India, from Juliana Horatia Ewing's *Six to Sixteen* (1875). Mrs. Vandaleur, with cheeks 'like the petals of a china rose' and 'rustling in silks and satins, glittering with costly ornaments, beautiful and scented, like a fairy dream', is as superficial as Mrs. Lennox.[102] For instance, she takes pride in her six-year old daughter Margery, showing off the girl in her 'pink silks'.[103] Yet, Burnett takes her criticism further, for Mrs. Lennox is almost homicidally negligent, given the danger she into which she places Mary. Burnett, furthermore, does not hesitate to draw an initial harsh picture of young Mary – something Ewing also does not do with Margery (and that Burnett did not do with Sara). Margery may initially also be 'not a little vain', proud of her dresses, but once orphaned and in England, she quickly transforms into the victim of her ten-year old second cousin Matilda Buller, who teases Margery upon her arrival by playing upon concepts of dress 'literacy'.[104] Matilda tauntingly asks, for example, whether Margery's Ayah dresses her and heartlessly informs her she can no longer wear her beloved 'pink silk' given her father's death.[105] In contrast, when Mary, having lost

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[98] Burnett, *Little Princess*, p. 124.
[99] Burnett, *Little Princess*, p. 89.
[100] Burnett, *Secret Garden*, p. 3.
[101] Burnett, *Secret Garden*, p. 3.
[102] Ewing, *Six to Sixteen*, p. 2
[103] Ewing, *Six to Sixteen*, p. 3.
[104] Ewing, *Six to Sixteen*, p. 3.
[105] Ewing, *Six to Sixteen*, p. 11.

both parents, arrives at Misselthwaite Manor, she, like her mother, is an empty, inhuman shell, almost as much a doll as Emily, unable to extend any kind of humanity. Her hands, the signifiers of giving, are symbolically concealed in black gloves, and the 'black dress [that] made her look yellower than ever' highlights her almost inhuman (and ghostly) yellow colour.[106] The description of her hair as 'limp' and 'straggl[ing] from under her black crepe hat' further enhances the doll-impression, emphasising that Mary, spiritually at least, is not alive.[107] Mary's inability to sew expresses criticism of an overreliance on the help of others, a failure to acquire, not unlike Sara, 'literacy in fabrics'. In Mary's case, however, this lack of literacy is sartorially dealt with in a much harsher manner through associations of cognitive underdevelopment or physical incapacity. The maid, Martha, upon hearing that Mary was dressed by her Ayah, wonders why 'grand people's children didn't turn out fair fools', since they are treated 'as if they was puppies!' or 'had neither hands nor feet of her own'.[108] Mary's inability to dress herself reduces her either to a young animal, or an infant, or an incapacitated individual; in all cases, Mary is deprived of the ability and thus also the right to consider herself a productive social member in possession of cognitive or physical abilities. This image of Mary as incapacitated evokes associations with Max Nordeau's *Degeneration* (1892). This work suggested that degeneration was endemic among the *fin-de-siècle* aristocracy that had lapsed into decadence and dissipation, and had become cut off from society. Colin's comparison of Mary to one of the girls in a painting certainly becomes expressive of the perception of aristocracy having reached a point of stasis:

> Some were pictures of children - little girls in thick satin frocks which reached to their feet and stood out about them […] There was a stiff, plain little girl rather like herself. She wore a green brocade dress and held a green parrot on her finger.[109]

This impression is enhanced by the illustration of this scene by Charles Robinson (Figure 4.11).[110]

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[106] Burnett, *Secret Garden*, pp.29, 13-14.
[107] Burnett, *Secret Garden*, pp. 13-14.
[108] Burnett, *Secret Garden*, pp. 29, 27.
[109] Burnett, *Secret Garden*, pp. 55.
[110] All illustrations for *Secret Garden* are from 'Charles Robinson – Secret Garden'. *Children's Book Illustrators and Illustrations Gallery – nocloo.com*.
<http://www.nocloo.com/gallery2/v/charles-robinson-secret-garden/crobinson-secretgarden05.jpg.html> [accessed 10.1.2009].

Figure 4.11: Illustration by Charles Robinson, in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *Secret Garden* (1911)

The illustration brings to mind the style of Van Dyke or Gainsborough, and the dress of the girl brings to mind mid-Seventeenth to late-Eighteenth fashion with the full skirt, tight bodice, puffy upper sleeves that reach slightly below the elbow and a low-cut neckline. Though her body faces the reader, the fact that her eyes are turned away, as if she were looking at the sky, makes it appear that her connection to humanity is reduced to communication with a parrot sitting on her arm – a creature that only imitates the voice of people. This girl may be an image of aristocratic perfection, but that is all she will ever be: a lifeless image that cannot connect to social surroundings, on whom dress has been placed as a costume.

As we can see, dress images repeatedly suggest that for all their upper-class identity, neither Sara nor Mary is perfect. Both girls ignore the responsibilities associated with their age, class and gender – and Burnett's stories do not shy away from subversively suggesting through sartorial images that such behaviour might have dire consequences. As we will see further in the following section, Burnett's stories also do not shy away from visualising through dress images that those not possessing an English or upper-class identity have a noble character that can revitalise the social body.

Non-upper classes and the dress of nurture

Even a cursory reading of Burnett's stories reveals that they are populated not only by English belonging to the upper classes, but also by individuals who are not English or belong to the middle, lower, and working classes – and we will see that their sartorial construction disrupts dominant constructions of the non-upper classes as simple or inferior. Characters such as Becky in *Little Princess* or Dick in *Fauntleroy* refuse stereotyping by possessing a complex identity and being of vital importance to the transformation process of the protagonists' moral and social identity.

In *Little Princess*, sartorial images contribute to Burnett's challenge of established stereotypes of the working classes through 14-year-old servant-girl Becky, who possessed emotional and imaginative capacity. Contemporary stereotypes saw servants as lacking 'sufficient interiority, and intellect to distinguish them as individuals'.[111] Becky's physical construction initially seems to repeat representation of the working-

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[111] Quote from Eve M. Lynch, 'Out of Place: The Masquerade of Servitude in Victorian Literature', *Pacific Coast Philology*, 31.1 (1996), pp. 88-106 (p. 88). For more on contemporary constructions of the non-upper classes as well as associations of class and cognitive abilities, see for instance Graham Wallas, *The Great Society: A Psychological Analysis* (1914; New York: Macmillan, 1914).

class child figure we discussed in Chapter Two, being 'stunted in growth', with a 'small, dingy figure' and a 'mind [that] could not grasp such amazing thoughts' as Sara's democratic proposition that she and Becky are 'the same'.[112] Furthermore, the examination of a pocket image in light of Barbara Burman's exploration of pockets discussed in the previous chapter, further suggests Burnett was influenced by contemporary stereotypes. Sara is placed into the feminised position of nurturer when she is described as enjoying to slip small presents 'into the old-fashioned pocket Becky carried under her dress skirt, tied round her waist with a band of tape'.[113] Becky, in turn, is reduced to a passive recipient of a restorative philanthropy by being described as being no longer 'the same Becky'.[114]

Yet, careful examination of sartorial images exposes Burnett's construction of Becky as more nuanced than initially it appears. First, Burnett repudiates contemporary stereotypes of non-upper-class members lacking sentiment and imagination. For instance, Becky presents Sara with a pincushion made of old and 'not quite clean red flannel', and asks her to '*pretend* it was satin with diamond pins'.[115] It is true, Sara acquainted Becky with the power of imagination through her story-telling, but in this instance, Becky shows she is quite capable of being more than the recipient – she becomes the teller of stories herself. Read through the prism of Giddens' theory on identity, Becky shows some capability of reflecting on her life and, by now making Sara recipient of a present by her, chooses to engage in actions society has taught her lie outside her capacities. Certainly, claiming that such actions mean Becky writes her own narrative that allows for the emergence of a self-identity unrestricted by social structures would be going too far. Second, if we consider the concept of 'sartorial literacy' discussed previously, we will see that Becky employs this literacy and, even if only fortuitously, improves her status as she moves from scullery maid to Sara's attendant. After Sara's dispossession, Becky helps Sara 'button her dress', thereby obviously providing not only practical but emotional help.[116] Contemporary readers might find it unsettling that Burnett portrays Sara, reduced to servitude, as still accepting that someone else dresses her – but we should consider that portrayal also serves to place a servant into the position of nurturer and a member of the upper classes into the position of recipient.

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[112] Burnett, *Little Princess*, pp. 45, 49.
[113] Burnett, *Little Princess*, p. 59.
[114] Burnett, *Little Princess*, p. 51.
[115] Burnett, *Little Princess*, pp. 62-63. Italics in the original.
[116] Burnett, *Little Princess*, pp. 88-89.

In *Fauntleroy*, the nurturing and revitalising powers of a non-upper-class member, the boot-black Dick, is illustrated through another pocket image. Read in a Giddensian framework, Dick is constructed sartorially as lacking agency and having his identity written by others: he is the poor child that has been saved from poverty and crime through the help of the upper classes. Once Cedric becomes Lord, he provides the financial means that allow Dick to become sole proprietor of a boot-black business and buys him 'some new clothes' so he can 'start out fair'.[117] Dick here reminds of the boot-black figure mentioned in Chapter Two, one of the discursive figures of the poor child employed in public and literary discourses to deplore social conditions and encourage philanthropic sentiments. Cedric ensures, in Barnardo-manner, that Dick does not share the fate of the English poor. However, we need to realise that Dick is a much more complex figure. Even more so than Becky, he begins rewriting the identity imposed upon him through his class-membership when he reverses roles and gives Cedric the present of a red silk handkerchief with the first money he makes, an item that certainly required him to spend a relatively large amount of money. If we recall, the content of men's pockets was associated with portable property and the public sphere, while that of women with domesticity and the private sphere.[118] Read metaphorically, what Dick gives Cedric upon his departure differs significantly from what Cedric receives from his grandfather, whose gifts will be discussed in more detail in the next section. For the handkerchief, placed inside Cedric's pocket, suggests that Dick remains close to Cedric, metaphorically providing emotional sustenance – and thus becomes transforms himself from recipient of upper-class philanthropy. Another dress reference illustrates that Dick continues this rewriting process of himself. Upon realising who is threatening Cedric's title, he assumes agency and uses the access he has gained to higher classes through his new (supposedly inferior) job: he asks the lawyer, Mr. Harrison, whose boots he blackens daily, for professional assistance. This results in Dick transcending not only geographic boundaries, but social ones as well. He is invited to England, with his brother, the father of the false claimant, and meets members of the upper and aristocratic classes on a personal basis, as the young lord's friend. In fact, Dick is shown to possess, in a Giddensian sense, the tools not only to write (to some extent at least) his own narrative, but also help Cedric write his own narrative by exposing Minna as a 'wicked' impostor.[119]

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[117] Burnett, *Fauntleroy*, p. 34.
[118] Burman, 'Pocketing the Difference', pp. 455-58.
[119] Burnett, *Fauntleroy*, p. 165.

As we can see by looking at dress references in these stories, Burnett's formulations of self-identity, paradoxically, is much more complex than it initially seems. Members of the upper classes display wicked behaviours associated with non-upper-class membership, while members of the non-upper classes display behaviours associated with upper-class membership. In either case, we witness a divergence from behaviours associated with class identity and a much more vocal critique of the *status quo* than we saw in the early-and mid-century animal stories discussed in the previous chapter. In the following section, we will further come to understand how the exploration of images of dress and undress further reveals that Burnett's stories even suggest that self-identity cannot be envisioned as a set of delimited categories, depending on class, nationality or gender.

Identity and the dress of fluidity

Indeed, sartorial images, even if employed to naturalise a class-system, contribute to challenging binary perceptions of class, gender and nation in favour of a more nuanced, even hybrid identity along which her child characters move. In the previous sections, we explored Burnett's rejection of contemporary perceptions of class associations. As we acknowledged, Burnett's stories, in their 'rags-to-riches' pattern, become a narration of transformation. In this section, we will see how it is precisely this promise of transformation which allows Burnett's stories to question existing boundaries. By looking at Sara and Cedric move along a continuum of identities, we will see how these three children shed and adopt forms of identity as they proceed – and that such fluidity creates restorative powers.

In *Little Princess*, the red coat in Figure 4.7 evokes associations with *Little Red Riding Hood*, a story that, despite its multiple versions, always addresses themes of deception, realisation and maturation – and Sara, in her coat, is seen about to begin the painful but necessary rite of change and passage into social maturity. The sable reference functions as the herald of loss and mourning, but Sara's grief becomes the trigger for Sara's identity-transformation, where she – and not her father or her class membership – determines who she is. The ermine reference also becomes a portent of transformation, since the stoat (or weasel) sheds its fur following the winter and this

coat is referred to as 'ermine' 'during the winter-white colour phase'.[120] Indeed, Sara transforms, painfully shedding her spoilt identity and replacing it with a more appropriate class- and gender-identity:

> She had begun to grow very fast, and, as she was dressed only in such clothes as the plainer remnants of her wardrobe would supply, she knew she looked very queer indeed. All her valuable garments had been disposed of […] Sometimes, when she passed a shop window with a mirror in it, she almost laughed outright on catching a glimpse of herself, and sometimes her face went red and she bit her lip and turned away.[121]

We should recall that when Sara first saw Emily, it was through a shop window. Since Emily can be said to have been Sara's mirror-image, Sara at that instance saw herself. However, Sara revealed her dress illiteracy when at the time all she wanted was to spoil Emily sartorially, by taking her 'to a dressmaker and have her things made to fit', since her claim that the garments 'will fit better if they are tried on' ignores that 'fitting' should also apply to age.[122] Now, as Sara looks at herself in a shop window, she sees herself, stripped of pretensions, wearing clothes that do not fit her. Yet, Sara is no longer the ignorant little girl – for while it may pain her, she can, at times, laugh at her new appearance. Combined with her acquisition of sewing skills, Sara gradually develops the dress literacy she previously lacked. Read within the framework of Giddens' theory, this literacy allows Sara to write her own, individualised narrative into existence. Sara's transformation involves travelling along a class continuum and physically experiencing a social reality she never knew existed. Thus, when she 'lifted her little savage hand and knocked Emily off the chair', she comes to realise that her much-adored Emily is 'nothing but a doll […] Never had a heart' – and that she, who has a heart, needs to cease accepting the role of a doll.[123] Sara has 'changed into a new kind of girl', and this change is what allows her to transform from kind, but naïve and ignorant upper-class girl to kind and mature upper-class young woman.[124]

Interestingly, this womanhood is not constructed in the gendered manner of the times: for Sara succeeds in surviving her trials not only because of Becky and Ram

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[120] 'ermine', *Encyclopædia Britannica Online.* Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2014. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/191701/ermine> [accessed 25 January 2014].
[121] Burnett, *Little Princess*, pp. 107-08.
[122] Burnett, *Little Princess*, p. 14.
[123] Burnett, *Little Princess*, pp. 113-14.
[124] Burnett, *A Little Princess*, pp. 89-90.

Dass, but also because of her own inherent nature – and that nature is, in fact, gendered as masculine. Sara might be a nurturing and motherly individual, but at times she is constructed as less of a princess and more of a prince, with her body being masculinised into a soldier. As her father says, 'had [Sara] been a boy [...] she would have gone about the country with her sword drawn, rescuing and defending everyone in distress'.[125] Sara might not be a boy, but ultimately she is only on the surface a pretty girl who enjoys feminised activities such as shopping for nice clothes and playing with dolls. Once she is stripped of clothes and privileges, and finds herself forced to defend herself, she does draw a sword – it simply proves to be a metaphorical sword, made up of imagination as well as the pins and needles that symbolise her newly gained dress literacy. And using this metaphorical sword, Sara develops a self-identity that helps her save herself and then others from 'distress'.

Cedric, of course, is the example *par excellence* of hybrid identity. While critics commonly refer to his suit when discussing this identity, I once again focus on pockets and in this case, their central role in the construction of a hybrid identity. In the previous chapter, we discussed how pocket images in Grahame's *Wind in the Willows* suggest not only the fluidity of gender identity, but also detrimental consequences of any overstepping of boundaries. According to Burman, placing hands in pockets was increasingly 'discouraged' as the nineteenth century came to an end because of associations 'with poor deportment, lack of restraint and degeneracy'.[126] In *Fauntleroy*, however, the negative associations of pockets are overturned. We already mentioned that the handkerchief Cedric receives from Dick grants the latter the ability to extend emotions. We will now see how pocket images also construct a male character as accessing the feminised realm without any negative consequences, and, second, associate decadence or degeneration with insistence on behaviours traditionally associated with masculinised behaviours and the inability to bend social rules. Let us first look at the latter. Cedric's grandfather, the Earl, shows his supposedly manly identity and certainly his ignoble consumer mentality when he instructs Mr. Havisham to inform Cedric of his title and 'let him [Cedric] have money in his pockets, and tell him his grandfather put it there'.[127] In a literal sense, the pocket functions, here, as a place to store money, but in a metaphorical sense, it becomes a sign of both upper-class identity and masculine identity. Since the content of the pocket is shown to be used

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[125] Burnett, *Little Princess*, pp. 26-33.
[126] Referring to G. Stanley Hall who stressed that 'habitually keeping the hands in the pockets should be discouraged' (G. Stanley Hall, *The Psychology of Adolescence* ([n.p.], Appleton, 1904), p. 468 as well as *The Times*, 6 August, 1868, in Burman, 'Pocketing the Difference', p. 463.
[127] Burnett, *Fauntleroy*, p. 36.

solely as a tool for self-gratification, we see traditional male identity depicted as cold and destructive.

For the Earl, empathy is something to be avoided, possibly because it might lead to experiencing emotions that he, as a representative of patriarchal and aristocratic Victorian society, fears. Thus, for the Earl, the idiom of 'having money in your pocket' quite literally translates into display of masculine power of consumption, denied to women. Mr. Havisham is portrayed as sharing his mentality, for when he 'put[s] his thin hand in his breast pocket and dr[aws] forth a large pocket-book', this 'pocket-book' has replaced what one would expect to find in the breast, namely the heart, symbolising love, care, empathy, humanity.[128] Like the Earl, Mr. Havisham thinks in monetary terms, finding within him only money to give. It is for this reason that, when he looks at Cedric, with his 'small, chubby hands […] thrust so deep into his pockets', he can only think in binary terms of the 'power for good or evil' that Cedric will inherit.[129] Burnett, however, exposes such binary perceptions of social class as well as gender roles as denigrating moral identity.

Multiple pocket images then visualise Cedric's restorative transcendence of gender boundaries. Cedric's masculinity is expressed through clothes that have pockets – and the content of these pockets or what Cedric places into them express feminised virtues of empathy and sympathy. Let us first examine how pocket images, touching upon issues of both gender and class, gradually build up Cedric's feminised nature by visualising his unwillingness to hurt others, even those belonging to a lower class than himself. For instance, we see Cedric can find in himself emotional largess to withdraw symbolically from an argument, and 'give' at least partial agreement when he places his 'hands in his pockets in delicate compliment to Mr. Hobbs', while trying to convince the latter, with whom he disagrees, that the aristocracy's social misbehaviour might be the result of ignorance.[130] When Cedric then learns that he is a lord himself, he writes his grandfather's long name down, to help him remember it and stores it in his pocket, thereby metaphorically keeping and temporarily hiding his social identity because he fears Mr. Hobbs' reaction. When Mr. Hobbs then asks who his grandfather is, Cedric withdraws this paper, but his narration of how he came to become lord – the successive death of all three of the Earl's sons – sets a more emotional mood, signalling that for Cedric, the human aspects of lordship will be of greater significance than the monetary ones. Let us now also look at how another set of pocket images contrast Cedric's

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[128] Burnett, *Fauntleroy*, p. 36.
[129] Burnett, *Fauntleroy*, p. 39.
[130] Burnett, *Fauntleroy*, p. 15.

alternative expression of power to that of men such as the old Earl and Mr. Havisham. For instance, when the Reverend Mr. Mordaunt informs the Earl about the impending eviction of Mr. Higgins, who due to ill fortune cannot pay his rent, the Earl asks Cedric, rather jokingly, what he would do. Cedric's reaction is once again to place 'his hands deep in his pocket' and find in himself – figuratively in his pockets – the humanity to tell his grandfather to let Mr. Higgins stay.[131] Cedric's act of kindness, in this instance, is limited to one individual, but another pocket image vocalises that Cedric's hybrid identity regenerates a whole society. When present at the restoration of the poor neighbourhood Earl's Court, Cedric talks to the workers 'with his hands in his pockets.[132] Cedric here uses his social class membership not only to contribute financially to social improvements, but also emotionally, spending time with them and listening to their problems.

As we see, Sara, with her pins and needles, metaphorically transforms into a soldier, and Cedric, with pockets filled metaphorically with so many emotions, into a nurturer. Both children thus transcend social boundaries as they write a self-identity into existence that is determined by their own choices and behaviours.

Conclusion

This discussion has show that Burnett's stories initially appear to differ only little from their predecessors. It seems that in a quite traditional manner, dress visualises class membership as inherited and intrinsic, as well as criticises disregard of social duties of class boundaries. However, dress becomes more than a simple costume, used straightforwardly to illustrate class: that is to say, fine clothing for the upper classes, coarse clothing for the lower classes and overstated dress for shallow or socially aspiring individuals. Burnett's stories are rich with complex sartorial images that are central not only to the delineation of character, but to the complexities of and tensions within these characters' identities. Material, colour and texture provide much more minute detail than first meets the eye. The exploration of these dress images reveals that while Burnett may have idealised a class-based society, possibly owing to her life in America, she also employed her texts metaphorically to strip the surface layers of such a society. This is what makes Burnett's stories different from their predecessors: the

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[131] Burnett, *Fauntleroy*, p. 90.
[132] Burnett, *Fauntleroy*, p. 124.

exposition of how a society of rigid structures and shallow behaviours cannot but bring moral and social decay with it. Even more importantly, however, dress images expose the formulation of a hybrid identity in Burnett's proposal of a solution to such decay. The child characters travel along an identity continuum, realising that while class or gender or national identity cannot be denied, it does not decide what they do, since they alone are responsible for their choices and actions that make up their self-identity. Thus, while these child protagonists do not resist the identity imposed upon them, they show through their dress engagement that they have chosen to create a responsible self-identity that can heal society. Let us now turn to Edith Nesbit and explore how, in the Bastable stories, sartorial references provide even more subversive social commentary. We will see that images of undress and cross-dress visualise how the child-protagonists consciously realise and reject the restrictive nature of established notions of gender and class and nationality, and ultimately establish an independent and hybrid self-identity.

Chapter 5
Edith Nesbit

We do not like him very much […] Albert is always very tidy. He wears frilly collars and velvet knickerbockers. I can't think how he can bear to.[1]

Introduction

Does this sartorial description not remind one of Burnett's Cedric? However, everyone likes Cedric and, as we saw in the previous chapter, his frills and laces reflect his complex and sympathetic character. In *The Story of the Treasure Seekers* (1899), from which this passage is taken and uttered by young narrator Oswald Bastable, the description refers to the neighbour-boy Albert, a character who emerges as weak and quite uninteresting. Why would Edith Nesbit include such a reference; why bring in a popular character such as Cedric only to denigrate another? Julia Briggs, in Nesbit's biography, claims that Albert represents the weaker side of young Edith Nesbit, from which she disassociates herself in her stories.[2] If one considers Briggs' contention that 'Nesbit presents her critique of life in terms of critique of reading habits and the peculiar dangers and deceptions that reading can offer', Oswald's derogatory comparison of Alfred to Cedric requires further consideration.[3] If we recall, sartorial images are intricately involved in Burnett's criticism of a rigid system that permits social indifference and inappropriate behaviours, even suggesting the healing powers of hybridity by depicting Sara and Cedric as experiencing identity as a continuum in the writing of their self-identity. However, as we saw in Burnett's stories, sartorial images are also involved in expressing a character's inherent class, national and gender identity, and the few times a character removes attire, this is done to reject markers of a wrongly imposed or assumed identity. Consider now what Oswald has to say about attire:

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[1] Edith Nesbit, *The Story of the Treasure Seekers* (1899; London: Puffin Books, 1958), p. 25. Hereafter referred to as *Treasure Seekers* in text, footnotes and illustrations.
[2] Julia Briggs, *A Woman of Passion: The Life of Edith Nesbit 1858-1924* (London: Hutchinson, 1987), p. 5. Hereafter referred to as *Woman of Passion* in footnotes.
[3] Briggs, *Woman of Passion*, p. 402.

We added the girls' striped petticoats. I am sorry their petticoats turn

up so constantly in my narrative, but they really are very useful,

especially when the band is cut off. [4]

The above passage is from an episode in *The Wouldbegoods* (1901), the sequel to *Treasure Seekers*, where Oswald and his siblings want to provide poor, thirsty travellers with refreshments by setting up the 'Benevolent Bar', with the petticoats creating a protective cover from the sun. At the beginning of *Treasure Seekers*, the first of the three Bastable stories, Mrs. Bastable has died and Mr. Bastable is in a difficult financial situation, having been betrayed by his business partner. The six children – Dora, Oswald Cecil, Dicky, the twins Alice and Noël, and Horace Octavius, or 'H. O.' – spend their days more or less unsupervised by their father or any other adult and try to find comfort and hope through various, mostly well-intended attempts to restore the 'fallen fortunes' of the family, with the 'Benevolent Bar' being one of these attempts.

Pamela Richardson cites Noel Streatfeild, according to whom 'Nesbit knew perfectly well that at the date when she wrote the book the girls not only did not wear petticoats but had never seen one'.[5] As we saw in Chapter Two, however, petticoats were very much still worn at the turn of the century. Certainly, her husband Hubert Bland, English socialist and one of the founders of the Fabian society as well as book reviewer and columnist for the radical newspaper *Manchester Sunday Chronicle*, was a great supporter of corsets, whose function he went as far as comparing to 'what the skeleton is to an animal'.[6] We also know that Nesbit herself was critical of the petticoat fashion. After joining the Fabian Society, she wore lighter clothing or wide, flowing gowns in the aesthetic fashion and pantaloons for cycling, thus rejecting the traditional, feminised appearance of layers of constricting or at least uncomfortable clothes that ideologically posited her outside the male sphere. As Briggs points out, such looser clothing permitted Nesbit to live an active life instead of being just a 'glorified fashion doll'.[7] And it seems Nesbit, not unlike Burnett, was dress-literate and used dress to

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[4] Edith Nesbit, *The Wouldbegoods* (1901; London: Puffin Books, 1978), p. 211. Hereafter referred to as *Wouldbegoods* in text and footnotes.

[5] Pamela Richardson, 'Boys, Girls, and Trains: Ambiguous Gender Roles in E. Nesbit's *The Railway Children*', *PostScript* 24.5 (2007), Papers from the 2006 Philological Association of the Carolinas conference, eds. Cindy Ho and Merritt Moseley, the University of North Carolina at Asheville, pp. 84-101. <http://www.unca.edu/postscript/volumexxiv.html> [accessed 22.4.2008], p. 94, referring to Noel Streatfeild, 'Introduction', p. 21.

[6] Hubert Bland, 'The Honest Woman', in *Essays*, digitsed edn. (London: Max Goeschen Ltd., 1914), pp. 253-59 (pp. 254-57).

[7] Briggs, *Woman of Passion*, p. 67.

make a statement. She dressed her daughter Iris and her adopted daughter Rosamund in Aesthetic fashion, even though it made the girls feel uncomfortable because they were 'different'.[8] She also encouraged her female friends to dress in non-restrictive attire, as, for instance, her friend Berta Ruck, whom she lent a dress in Liberty fashion in 1904 to which she referred as 'a picturesque rag' since she 'hate[d] blouses and skirts, especially in a place like this [Grez], where Nesbit was holidaying]'.[9] In fact, Nesbit's awareness of (subversive) meaning encoded into dress was so acute she used a corset box to carry around her tobacco and cigarette holder, thus anticipating Oswald's claim to the practicality of petticoats for other functions than attire. Maybe that is what her husband meant when he argued that clothes were 'symbolic' and a 'form of speech; in the case of the cleverest women the subtlest of all forms of speech'.[10]

Again, the argument of this chapter is that there is a close relationship between fashion, gender, class politics and power in the three Bastable stories, echoing the complex discourses that sought to define individuals according to their sex, class and nationality. To return just for a moment to Bland: as he put it, '[y]ou will never get anywhere near unto understanding women until you have got somewhere near unto understanding corsets'.[11] Reading the language of not just corsets, but attire overall in the Bastable stories shows that, indeed, Nesbit systematically developed a code for dressing, undressing and undressing the characters she employed in her discursive exploration of resistance to traditional roles and stereotypes. She thereby visualised the difference between what the world sees and what the individual experiences. We need to remember that the intellectual circles in which she moved were, at the time, stimulated by theories proposed by individuals such as Sigmund Freud, Georg Simmel and Henri-Louis Bergson, which anticipated those of the self and the concept of self-reflexivity, such as proposed by Anthony Giddens. Admittedly, Nesbit was not a proponent of women's suffrage, probably influenced by her husband. Bland's position on the so-called Women's Question was quite conservative, as we can see in one of his argument that '[w]oman's realm is the realm of the heart […] not of the brain and the intelligence'.[12] Yet, Nesbit was by no means a conformist young woman or a powerless victim, happy to accept the role of mother and homemaker. Quite the contrary, she openly defied social decorum and established herself as woman capable of assuming control. Indeed, Nesbit's philosophical and political interests as well as her lifestyle and

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[8] Briggs, *Woman of Passion,* pp. 213-14.
[9] Berta Ruck, in Briggs, *Woman of Passion*, p. 241.
[10] Bland, 'The Honest Woman', pp. 254-55.
[11] Bland, 'The Honest Woman', p. 255.
[12] Hubert Bland, 'If I Were a Woman', *Essays*, pp. 203-11 (p. 209).

dress reveal she not only resisted traditional gender stereotypes, but also lived a life characterised by determination, independence and self-reliance.

So, when Oswald claims in *Treasure Seekers* that to 'cut off' the 'band' of the petticoats renders them much more useful, he also wants to 'cut off' the 'band' that links to considerations of social decorum and might prevent him and his siblings from executing their scheme. Portrayed in an ironic, but also affectionate manner, Oswald is smug, conceited and proud of his gender, race and class; he also fears all things different from him, be they female, non-English or not of his own class. By depicting Oswald, a budding jingoist and patriarch, as repeatedly confounded by the puzzling realisation that dress may express a certain identity, but that this expression is by no means reliable or invariably truthful, Nesbit suggests that the Bastable children (and thus the readers) have been taught false constructions of Victorian and Edwardian identity. Briggs contends that Nesbit employs the voice of the child to expose and mock the adult world of Victorian times.[13] My argument is that Nesbit also employs the child-protagonists' dress engagement to address the position of women, but also the costs of patriarchy to men in a more playful, seemingly innocent manner. Just as James Matthew Barrie's play *Peter Pan; or, the Boy who Wouldn't Grow up* (1904), equates growing up with loss of imagination and rigidity of personality, so Nesbit suggests that the young are given license to experiment with other selves, but as they pass through institutions such as school, permission to experiment is systematically curtailed and withdrawn – with conformity to social rules expressed through conformity to fashion tenets in the Bastable stories. The children, however, represent the power of transformation since they prove resistant to being bound either by clothes or restrictions to established behaviours. Over the course of the three stories, we see that they increasingly display the agency to remove or exchange the clothes that signify the inscription of these patriarchal images. By alternating between clear-cut gender and social roles through acts of dressing, undressing, cross-dressing and dressing-up, they uncover the entrenched and culturally-transmitted perception of gender, class and national identity as normative, and expose the need to return to a simpler state of existence in which identity is not categorised.

This chapter explores how Nesbit joins Burnett in constructing an unorthodox view of an identity that defies rigid classifications of Victorian and Edwardian society.

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[13] Julia Briggs, 'Women Writers: Sarah Fielding to E. Nesbit', in *Children and their Books: A Celebration of the Work of Iona and Peter Opie*, eds. Gillian Avery and Julia Briggs (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 221-50 (p. 248).

Nesbit depicts Oswald and his siblings as crossing the divide between adult and child, boy and girl, English and non-English, and overall revising childhood into a more liberal state of existence through experimentation with dress that is not determined by adult and social expectations.

Wearing dress: The fallacy of defining identity

We will first examine dress images in the Bastable books that disrupt the semiotics of clothing which frequently, as we saw in the previous chapter, contributed (albeit with many inconsistencies) to the naturalisation of identity as inherent. The Bastable children exist in a world of transition, where old roles are questioned and new ones emerge – and playfully depicted as initially reluctant for things to change. In a Giddensian sense, Nesbit depicts the Bastable children as confronted with the realisation that in a post-traditional society, identity is no longer conferred upon them because of gender or class or nationality, but shaped through a multiplicity of influences. Within such a framework, the children represent the citizens of this post-traditional world, obliged to assume responsibility for their self-identity – a responsibility that explains their reluctance only too well. In this section, I will look at specific episodes where dress is employed, at times very inconsistently but also very fascinatingly, to alert to the fallacy of defining identity based on established notions of class, nation or gender – and how such logic results in misperception, misrepresentation and denial of the complexity of identity.

Let us begin with discussing how sartorial images in the interplay of three male characters – Oswald, Noël and Albert – illustrate the problematic aspects of class discourse. Take, for instance, Oswald's quoted remark about Albert dressed in Fauntleroy-fashion, which references the fashion that allowed parents to perform their upper-class membership or to masquerade as belonging to a higher class. A closer examination of this reference will allow us to perceive how Nesbit uses dress to enforce her (as we will also see, somewhat inconsistent) critique of middle-class hypocrisy. Oswald might be jealous of Albert's money and class at the beginning of the first Bastable story, but he has also been taught that his middle-class identity is superior and inscribed into his clothes. Paradoxically, he also believes this is not the case for Albert, given that the word 'bear' suggests that Albert could refuse to wear the clothes. To better understand Nesbit's critical deconstruction of this middle-class identity, we need

to take a step back, here, and contextualise Nesbit's class references to clothing. According to Humphrey Carpenter, Nesbit's socialism or leftism was only skin-deep, with her novels featuring middle-class families and endorsing middle-class values.[14] The Victorian middle-class had increasingly assumed responsibility to observe and control the working classes for purposes such as education or poverty or disease, as did, for instance, Henry Mayhew or Charles Booth.[15] Nesbit herself came from a lower-middle-class family that achieved affluence through an agricultural college run by her father, which had been started as a school by her grandfather; Nesbit made her money through what Briggs calls the 'middle-class profession of letters'.[16] Later, with Bland, Nesbit enjoyed increasing affluence, which she visualised by moving to larger houses and hiring more servants. However, by participating in the founding of the Fabian society that championed social justice and equal rights, Nesbit inconsistently also questioned middle-class hegemony – for, after all, social justice is inimical to a middle class that requires a working class to maintain its privileged position.[17]

Let us now recall Carpenter's claim of Nesbit's socialism being only superficial. Oswald's assumed superiority emerges, for instance, in *The New Treasure Seekers* (1904) through a highly complex and confusing dress image as hypocritical. The children, still eager to dispense charity, have supposedly learned by that time that they need to assume responsibility of who they are and that dress does not express them.[18] Yet, when they are in Camberwell, a poor neighbourhood that reminds Oswald of the slum-lives described by another children's author of the time, Hesba Stretton, Oswald resorts to middle-class rhetoric when he describes how 'forsaken children do wonders by pawning their relations' clothes'.[19] This 'pawning', standing in direct contrast to the almost flippant doffing of the jackets and petticoats we will see the Bastable children practicing over the course of the three stories, emphasises how middle-class discourse condescendingly constructs the identity of slum-children. Oswald, supposedly so different from the high-principled children of Stretton's fiction, fails to grant poor children the same liberties he and his siblings have appropriated regarding dress and decorum, now simply parroting what he has been taught. His description constructs the

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[14] Humphrey Carpenter, 'E. Nesbit a Victorian in Disguise', in Carpenter, *Secret Gardens*, pp. 126-37 (p. 128).
[15] Andrew Miles and Mike Savage, *The Remaking of the British Working Class, 1840-1940* (1994; London: Routledge, 2003), p. 58.
[16] Briggs, *Woman of Passion*, pp.xix, 2-3.
[17] Briggs, *Woman of Passion*, p. 77.
[18] Nesbit, *The New Treasure Seekers* (1904; London: Puffin, 1982). Hereafter referred to as *New Treasure Seekers* in text, footnotes and illustrations.
[19] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, p. 137.

children in Camberwell as desperately employing attire that might at some point have even belonged to a relative who belonged to the upper or middle classes to make a living. By doing so, Oswald perpetuates the discourse that constructs these children as dependant on middle-class charity. Does this dress-image unintentionally visualise the somewhat inconsistent ideology of Nesbit and Bland that championed socialism but did not practice it, which years later caused Herbert George Wells to accuse Bland of 'incongruity'?[20] Certainly, these poor children are not given the agency sartorially to disrupt the narrative that society is writing for them; theirs is a narrative written by the middle class as it writes its own. Or should Oswald's comment be considered as a playful, albeit unsophisticated attempt to visualise the narrow-mindedness of such class rhetoric? After all, Wells also admits that Nesbit (in contrast to Bland) was 'radical and anarchic', and the Bastable children 'an anarchic lot'.[21] Oswald's comment might well mean that these children, just as he and his siblings, resist the identity imposed upon them by refusing to wear attire that categorises them as poor, and instead employ the money they receive through the pawning to do 'wonders' and write their own narrative.

Whatever should be the case for the poor children, Oswald's class-tainted remark on Albert's attire also draws attention to the fallacious nature of discourse that naturalised upper-class appearance (and the upper classes) as more effeminate and middle-class appearance (and the middle classes) as masculine. Treating clothes as markers of identity, he confers upon Albert a feminised masculinity, with non-English associations, and confirms that, by extension, he, dressing as he has been taught boys should dress, possesses a proper English male and middle-class identity that is much more robust, masculine and stable than that of a boy belonging to a higher class. Seen through the prism of Foucault's theory of control, Oswald has experienced the policing of gender and class in such a way that he knows what is expected of him as an Edwardian male. But then there is the episode in *Treasure Seekers* with the editor of the *Daily Recorder*, whom Oswald and his brother Noël visit. When Oswald discovers that others do not necessarily first judge him on the basis of his clothing, he also discovers that identity is the product of internalised traditional gender and class perceptions:

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[20] Herbert George Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography* (1943, 1984), pp. 602-04, in Briggs, *Woman of Passion*, p. 318.
[21] Wells, *Experiment in Autobiography*, pp. 603-04, in Briggs, *Woman of Passion*, p. 318

I can't think how he could have asked! Oswald is said to be a very manly-looking boy for his age […] Noël had turned quite pale. He is disgustingly like a girl in some ways.[22]

Maybe in this episode, Oswald's words echo those of Nesbit's own brothers from whom Nesbit concealed her first literary efforts to avoid being mocked, given that in her family, poetry was considered 'a feminine, even an effeminate interest'.[23] Oswald has been taught to believe that a proper, respectable English boy with a supposedly visible middle-class and masculine identity can, under no circumstances, be associated with creativity – paradoxically refusing to consider his brother is also a middle-class boy, only younger. Nesbit, here, criticises patriarchal rigidity, suggesting that Noël is yet untouched by the lessons Oswald has learned and that have crushed his imagination by imposing a limited Edwardian masculine identity upon him.

A brief look at Gordon Browne's illustration of the scene exposes Oswald's willing refusal to acknowledge the complexity of identity (Figure 5.1).[24] Oswald and Noël are, in fact, similarly dressed: each wears a suit, a shirt, tie, knickerbockers, shoes and knee-high socks. Certainly, they both seem to be paradigmatic of Victorian middle-class respectability. It is hard to tell, at least from this illustration, on what grounds Oswald considers himself more 'manly' than his brother. However, his association of creativity with femininity is a manifestation of *fin-de-siècle* anxiety that androgyny was a symptom of degeneration, undermining British masculinity. Noël, pale, shy and artistic, embodies what Claudia Nelson refers to as the opposite of the ideal boy at the turn of the century: a 'Degenerate in the Closet'.[25]

Oswald unthinkingly fears all things that cross established boundaries and almost desperately clings to traditional English, patriarchal values that can be visualised through the appropriate clothes and appearances. This distancing, in fact, is expressed in this illustration through the positioning of the chairs and the children's body posture. Oswald sits quite far away from his younger brother and turns away from him, toward the editor (whom, the reader can assume, he considers manly); his hands grab the chair and suggest he needs to stable himself. Noël, on the other hand, lacks all feelings of

[22] Nesbit, *Treasure Seekers*, p. 57.
[23] Briggs, *Woman of Passion*, p. 29.
[24] Illustrations taken from Nesbit, *Treasure Seekers*, digitised edn. (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1899). <http://ia341037.us.archive.org/3/items/storyoftreasures00nesbrich/storyoftreasures00nesbrich.pdf> [accessed 17.6.2009].
[25] Nelson, *Boys Will Be Girls*, pp. 52-53.

awkwardness, directly facing the editor and sitting in a position that suggests he feels much more comfortable than his brother does.

Let us move on to the another example of how dress functions in the Bastable stories to teach the children and the readers that identity – in this case national – cannot be categorised or naturalised; that it is a matter of personal choices. Rigid xenophobic perceptions of nationalistic identity are criticised in the episode involving the children's excursion into the Chinese neighbourhood to search for their supposedly missing dog Pincher. The description of how they get to this neighbourhood brings to mind perilous journeys over the sea since '[t]he boat tumbled and tossed just like a sea-boat'.[26] In this neighbourhood, the children discover a foreign environment in the midst of their own country. Once again, postcolonial theory can help understand Nesbit's deconstruction of imperialist discourse here. For instance, when Oswald claims they entered 'wild, savage places' where people such as the Chinese 'eat dogs, as well as rats and birds' nests and [have] other disgraceful forms of eating', we hear echoes of so-called domestic orientalism mentioned in Chapter Three, applied to people from Asia living on English soil.[27] Dress images repeatedly show how Oswald has been conditioned through these discourses to reject what his senses tell him. For instance, he describes the neighbourhood as barren 'dead Eastern domain' where 'the people's clothes […] seemed the same sort of dull colour – a sort of brown-grey', but paradoxically notes immediately afterwards that '[s]ome of the women had blue, or violet or red shawls'.[28] The East obviously could not be perceived as barren, given its rich cultural past, and people of the East could not be generalised as dressed dully, given the many instances of their rich and colourful attire. Oswald, however, perceives the world in almost black-and-white terms, unable to see the colourful clothes of the people and thus unable, metaphorically, to see their colourful and complex identity. In a Foucauldian framework, this misperception visualises that Oswald has been indoctrinated by imperialistic discourse that orientalises the non-English body, conditioned to perceive this body as inferior.

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[26] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, p. 63.
[27] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, pp. 63-64; Kimberley Reynolds, '*Froggy's Little Brother*: Nineteenth-Century Evangelical Writing for Children and the Politics of Poverty', p. 257.
[28] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, pp. 64-66.

Figure 5.1: Illustration by Gordon Browne, in Edith Nesbit's *Treasure Seekers* (1904), p. 7

The absurdity of insisting on categorising individuals is further evident in Oswald's confusion arising from the dress of female characters. Let us look at Mrs. Leslie and Mrs. Bax, both immensely interesting figures in the Bastable stories that defy gender stereotyping and might be considered a self-portrait of Nesbit herself. In *New Treasure Seekers*, Oswald describes Mrs. Leslie, the woman he and Noël meet when travelling to London in the hope of selling Noël's poetry, as not 'talk[ing] a bit like a real lady, but more like a jolly sort of grown-up boy in a dress and hat'.[29] Given that she conforms to contemporary fashion, it is quite amusing that Mrs. Leslie confuses narrow-minded Oswald, for whom appearance, after all, is so important – for he is suddenly faced with a woman whose clothes mark her as female, but whose speech resists feminine gender stereotype. Clothes we can don or doff, and though they might be extensions of ourselves, our bodies, even our identities, they are never an essential part of us. In contrast, our voices are usually understood as more inherent, stemming from inside us and often resistant to being controlled, as when we are angry or sad. Of course, even voices can be manipulated; for instance, by trying an accent. Yet, Mrs Leslie appears not to purposefully imitate male speech, but rather to use it naturally. Reference to French Feminist Luce Irigaray helps understand exactly how complex this character is. According to Irigaray, women are deprived of their own language and reduced to silence, senseless chattering, or imitation of patriarchal discourse that constitutes a form of hysteria'.[30] We know that in Victorian times, women were excluded from the masculinised public sphere of work and discourse; and even in Edwardian times, women had not yet gained equal access to public discourse. We also know that such exclusion rested largely on the depreciation of the female intellect on grounds of evolutionary developments and on medical reasoning that saw women's reproductive organs as rendering them prone to nervous maladies and constructing intellectual investment as ruinous to reproductive functions – a rhetoric that reminds strongly of Irigaray's 'hysteria'.[31] The Fabian Society, however, exposed Nesbit to very different women who participated in written and oral form in the masculinised sphere of public discourse, no longer confining themselves to the socially accepted participation in

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[29] Nesbit, *Treasure Seekers*, p. 54.

[30] Luce Irigaray, *Spéculum de l'autre femme* (Paris: Mouton, 1974); *Ce sexe qui n'en pas un* (Paris: Minuit, 1977), in Toril Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics*, 2nd edn. (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 126-48.

[31] For more on the construction of women as hysterical see for instance Janet Oppenheim, *Shattered Nerves: Doctors, Patients, and Depression in Victorian England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 181-232. Hereafter referred to as *Shattered Nerves* in footnotes; Brian Easlea, *Science and Sexual Oppression: Patriarchy's Confrontation with Women and Nature* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981), pp. 138-69.

literary discourse. It is true, women such as socialist activist and Nesbit's friend Eleanor Marx, who in 1898 committed suicide, provided ample fodder for theories on biologically-predisposed mental weaknesses. Yet, there were other women who refused being silenced and marginalised. For instance, Annie Besant, speaker for the National Secular society, wrote a column for the radical newspaper *National Reformer* and published in 1877, together with the editor of the *National Reformer*, Charles Bradlaugh, Charles Knowlton's *The Fruits of Philosophy: Or The Private Companion of Young Married People* (1832), a work on birth control that had gotten Knowlton imprisoned for three months and accused of blasphemy when it had been published in the United States – and that got her and Bradlaugh accused of blasphemy and sedition.[32] Nesbit might have been hesitant to embrace the feminist cause, but she herself served as member of the pamphlet committee in the Fabian society and rejected social mores, visualised through attire that was '*deliciously* pleasant to wear'.[33] Mrs. Leslie, too, refuses be limited to a marginalised position of nervous imbalance and chatter. Add to that her androgynous name, which is preceded by the 'Mrs.' and thus further complicates her sexuality, suggesting that, while she is of the female sex, her gender is more indistinct. Read through the lens of Giddens' theory, Mrs. Leslie assumes agency in controlling her identity by choosing a specific lifestyle that forms her personal narrative – and thereby blatantly confounds the binary gender categories Oswald has been taught to accept as natural.

A similarly complex character is Mrs. Bax in *New Treasure Seekers*, freshly arrived from Australia and supposedly having lost her femininity through having encountered the savageness of natives. Again reminiscent of Nesbit owing to her short hair and the smoking, Mrs. Bax refuses to accept appropriate attire, either for herself or the children. The criticism of simplistic imperialistic rhetoric, expressed through the explanation of Mrs. Bax being different because she lived abroad (despite her Englishness), can be better understood if we consider Oswald's confusion concerning the Chinese lady the children met in the Chinese neighbourhood. The Chinese lady acts as Oswald probably expects her to, as a woman and a non-English national, subserviently, prepared 'to go down on the floor before Alice', but her traditional Chinese appearance with 'green-grey trousers' and 'hair […] pulled back very tight, and twisted into a little knob at the back', imbues her with a more dominant, almost masculine appearance, and suggests a narrative incompatible with Oswald's world

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[32] Information on Marx and Besant from Oppenheim, *Shattered Nerves*, pp. 224-25.
[33] Quotation from undated letter by Edith Nesbit to Ada Breakell, according to Briggs written after 23.8.1885, in Briggs, *Woman of Passion*, p. 67. Italics in the original.

view.[34] However, Chinese nationality and metaphoric residence in a far-away place allow Oswald to distance himself (and his siblings, for that matter) as English, living in England. In Mrs. Bax's case, Oswald adopts imperialist rhetoric about the deleterious effects of coming into contact with otherness, and assumes that her supposed experiences imply her identity has in some way been tainted – even if she is English. The children's first impressions of and reactions to Mrs. Bax then mock the pervasiveness of Victorian cultural representations of identity that insist on naturalising women as passive and pure, almost sanitised. Mrs. Bax has most certainly written her own narrative, but the children respond to her, with her 'short hair' and her short skirts, with incomprehension and mistrust, refusing to see what their senses tell them.[35] A case in point is that when 'the room smelt of tobacco smoke', they believe that someone visited Mrs. Bax and never even consider that she, herself, might smoke and disregard imposed gender-restrictions.[36] One more dress image expresses that such transgression implies vitality. The children might have a 'sleek, quiet tidiness' of appearance, but Mrs. Bax ridicules them as resembling 'rag dolls'.[37] Given that a doll connotes lifelessness and raggedness connotes shabbiness (and also plays upon the discourses on poverty that naturalised stereotypes of the poor, discussed in Chapter Two), Mrs. Bax expresses here that adherence to exaggerated propriety stifles personality to such an extent that it results in draining the vitality, even the life, of a person – turning them ultimately into puppets without any useful function in society.

Mrs. Bax and Mrs. Leslie, in fact, evoke the *fin-de-siècle* girl described by Sally Mitchell as wanting to be a boy and being granted 'boy privileges' sometimes as late as the age of 25 as 'preparation for adult life'.[38] They also remind one of the so-called New Woman mentioned in Chapter Two. This New Woman exposed herself to the male gaze without shame, negotiating a career and independence from men, through her voice and name or her clothes or her cigarette, or all of these together. Thus, they also bring to mind the homosexual woman publicised but also pathologised through Havelock Ellis' 1895 work, 'Sexual Inversion in Women'. The term 'inversion of sex' was introduced by anti-feminist Eliza Lynn Linton, who associated gender deviance with mental deviance. In her derision of the New Woman, Linton contended this New Woman possessed 'a curious inversion of sex, which does not necessarily appear in the body, but is evident enough in the mind'; according to Linton, this woman threatened society,

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[34] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, p. 70.
[35] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, p. 190.
[36] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, p. 195.
[37] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, pp. 204, 191.
[38] Mitchell, *The New Girl*, p. 103.

since 'in obliterating the finer distinctions of sex she is obliterating the finer traits of civilisation'.[39] Ellis, a progressive thinker, may have not conflated gender deviance with feminist attitudes and instead used this term to describe the homosexual in a more objective manner, but his writing does occasionally lapse into constructing homosexuality as physically and psychologically abnormal. Nesbit, given her acquaintance with Ellis through the Fabian Society, almost certainly read, or had at least heard about, this work – and it is very interesting how her work answers to his theories, using but also challenging them. Ellis describes homosexual women as possessing a 'more or less distinct trace of masculinity' and showing preference for 'male attire when practicable' (though he does admit that there are also women who wear male attire without being homosexuals).[40] Interestingly, for our reading of Mrs. Leslie and Mrs. Bax, Ellis also contends that:

> even when they still retain female garments these usually show some traits of masculine simplicity […] Not only is the tone of the voice often different, but there is reason to suppose that this rests on a basis of anatomical modification. At Moll's [Albert Moll, German psychologist and founder of modern sexology] suggestion, Flatau [Theodor Simon Flatau, German otolaryngologist] examined the larynx in twenty-three inverted women, and found in several a very decidedly masculine type of larynx, especially in cases of distinctly congenital origin. In the habits not only is there frequently a pronounced taste for smoking (sometimes found in quite feminine women). [41]

Looking at Mrs. Leslie and Mrs. Bax through Ellis' lens, we might well say that both of them fit to some extent the profile of this sexually inverted woman, this New Woman, even if the 'Mrs.' suggests a heterosexual relationship – the one with her voice, the other with her smoking. However, sartorial images also alert to critique of Ellis' theory, expressing what Briggs considers the liberating potential of Nesbit's texts for

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[39] Eliza Lynn Linton, 'The Wild Women: As Politicians' (July 1891) and 'The Wild Women: As Social Insurgents' (October 1891), both in *Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review*, ed. James Knowles, vol. xxx, July-December 1891, digitised edn. (London: Sampson Low, Marston & Company, 1891), pp. 79-88 (p. 79); 596-605 (p. 597) respectively. For more on Eliza Lynn Linton, see Deborah Cohler, *Citizen, Invert, Queer: Lesbianism and War in Early Twentieth-Century Britain* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), p. 3; Antje Peukert, *Off the Beaten Track? Divergent Discourses in Victorian Women's Travelogues* (Norderstedt, Germany: GRIN Verlag, 2005), pp. 25-28.
[40] Havelock Ellis, 'Sexual Inversion in Women', in *Studies in the Psychology of Sex. Sexual Inversion*, vol. ii, 3rd edn., digitised edn. (1895; Philadelphia: F.A. Davis Company, 1915), p. 245.
[41] Ellis, 'Sexual Inversion in Women', pp. 255-56.

children. By exposing the Bastable children and readers to different forms of 'otherness', be that a boy emasculated by frilly dress or a woman de-feminised by masculine voice and habits, Nesbit visualises that just as an individual cannot be defined through dress, identities are too complex to be categorised and judged according to gender, nationality or class. Here we see in other words how dominant discourse, which in Foucault's view polices the body, offers Nesbit the critical space to articulate alternative gender constructions. Mrs. Bax and Mrs. Leslie are women who, not unlike Nesbit herself, adjust the feminine stereotype to their own purposes, in a Giddensian sense, to the life they want to lead and the identity they want to create.

So, as we can see, dress images indeed alert both the children and the readers to the complexity of identity and the impossibility of considering it as inherent and containing it. Let us now also explore how dress images are involved in Nesbit's engagement with the consequences of a discourse that, as we saw in the previous two chapters, promotes a Foucauldian control of bodies and thus refuses in a Giddensian sense the writing of self-identity. Since I ended my discussion of this New Woman or sexually inverted woman rather abruptly, let me focus on Nesbit's depiction of the consequences of such discourse on the construction of the feminine gender.

Stifling dress: The destructiveness of socially imposed identity

It is, in fact, exciting how sartorial images alert to Nesbit's complicated position on socio-political changes that concerned the female sex and its relationship to the male sex – as well as her subtle (and at times contradictory) engagement with these changes. Nesbit's exposure to women such as Besant, who championed birth control, and men such as Edward Carpenter, who championed free love, allowed Nesbit to construct a life for herself that resisted easy categorisation. Yet, the sartorial construction of Nesbit's adult female characters does not challenge Victorian tenets of fashion or decorum. For instance, neither Mrs. Leslie nor Mrs. Bax wear trousers. This can be said to mean they do not write a narrative for themselves that radically challenges Edwardian tenets of propriety. However, in this section we will also see that Nesbit does employ sartorial images to critique both fashion and feminine gender constructions – but that, interestingly, she employs less controversial characters to do so, such as Miss Ashleigh or the ladies in the Maidstone Antiquarians Society. Why, we might wonder, is Nesbit not

more open in her critique; why does she not create characters that dare, like her, resist restrictive fashions?

To understand Nesbit's construction of these female characters, we need to remember that the figure of the New Woman was employed to engage with a wide range of issues; we also need to understand that since not all women supported the same causes, this figure did not hold the same meaning for all and was not employed in public or literary discourses in the same manner.[42] We also need to remember that not all New Women authors were politically active or supported women's suffrage or lived unconventional lives – and that not all women who supported a change of the *status quo* rejected conventional attire.[43] Take, for instance, Lydia Becker, advocate of women's rights, who nonetheless in 1888 criticised radical dress and the abandonment of the corset, or Emmeline Pankhurst and other members of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU), founded in 1903, who fashioned themselves in the highly feminine dress of early Edwardian times.[44] Kortsch explains such sartorial choices as a 'performance of femininity' intended to temper public criticism, Alison Lurie as meant to 'disarm' critics.[45] Nesbit, on the other hand, did not engage in sartorial performances to convince her social environment she accepted existence in the confines of late Victorian and Edwardian morality. We might say that this is surprising, given her husband's anti-suffrage views and her own criticism of the suffrage movement, even expressed in her literary work, as in *The Magic City* (1910) through the character of the unpleasant 'Pretenderette', who threatens social order. Yet, careful analysis of dress images also reveals a fascinating subtext that harshly censures a body politics that victimises and represses women – and indicates that Nesbit's condemnation of the suffrage movement might partly have been performance as well.

Take, for instance, the young woman Alice imagines to be engulfed in flames, in the episode where the children accidentally cause a fire. This female figure very likely expresses rejection of the public discourses Bland fuelled with his derogatory comments concerning women's role in society. Upon seeing the fire, Alice's imagination gets out of control, and she wonders if 'a beautiful young lady in a muslin dress was passing by,

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[42] Kortsch, *Dress Culture*, pp. 15-16
[43] Kortsch, *Dress Culture*, pp. 15, 91.
[44] Kortsch, *Dress Culture*, p. 91.
[45] Quotation from footnote in Kortsch, *Dress Culture*, p. 91; Alison Lurie, *The Language of Clothes* (New York: Random House, 1981), in Kortsch, *Dress Culture*, p. 92.

and a spark flew on to her, and now she is rolling in agony enveloped in flames'.[46] This might well be a humorous reference to earlier and contemporary dramatic stories that placed a young woman in a desperate situation, possibly to be saved by a young man. This image, however, is very interesting from a sartorial perspective for the poignant and complex social commentary contained – especially since once again, we see how Nesbit ultimately refrains from fully employing the adult female body. So, first of all, what does muslin suggest? Muslin dresses had become unfashionable by that time, replaced by heavy silks and velvets and probably reminiscent of the first decades of the nineteenth century and the supposedly flimsy Regency fashion where women did not wear corsets.[47] However, we must also recall that Regency fashion enjoyed a revival in Nesbit's time, and Nesbit's love for Aesthetic dress. So, can we assume it references a time when women had even less rights than in Nesbit's time, without access to education or property, and thus completely dependent on patriarchal structures? Certainly, Alice's imagined figure in muslin dress suggests a pure young woman, helpless and in need of protection or salvation. This figure also verbalises what this position can imply: the fire becomes expressive of the destructive force of civilisation that causes anguish and death, with the muslin dress visualising social expectations that prevent the woman from escaping the destructive flames. And what might it mean that Alice is proven wrong, and although Oswald considers it 'as bad nearly as Alice's wild dream', it is only a bridge burning?[48] Maybe it is simply yet another instance where Nesbit hesitates to take a clear position on the so-called Women's Question. Maybe, however, we need to consider that in Nesbit's case, this figure expresses Nesbit's refusal, not acceptance, of a destructive body politics. Thus, this figure in muslin dress might be read as suggesting that, unlike in the past, women in Edwardian times were no longer the victims, no longer waiting for anyone, either the dashing gentleman or the Bastable children, to save them.

Let us now look at two other sartorial instances that vocalise the consequences of conforming to social and gender expectations. One such example is Miss Margaret Ashleigh, the fiancée of Albert's uncle, who initially appears to be a victim of unnatural repression. Oswald naïvely wonders in *New Treasure Seekers* about the impending wedding between Albert's uncle and Miss Ashleigh, 'how a lady can want so many petticoats and boots and things just because she's going to be married'.[49] This

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[46] Nesbit, *Wouldbegoods*, p. 135.
[47] Kortsch, *Dress Culture*, p. 117.
[48] Nesbit, *Wouldbegoods*, p. 135.
[49] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, p. 10.

description visualises a fashion doll, a being with only decorative purposes, exactly the type of woman Nesbit so adamantly refused to become.[50] His sister's reply suggests the restrictiveness of the life of women who have accepted such a fashion doll life. According to Alice, Miss Ashleigh needs so many clothes for her honeymoon in Italy because 'in Rome you can only buy Roman clothes, and I think they're all stupid bright colours – at least I know the sashes are'.[51] Alice's derision of clothes should draw readers' attention, for it is un-childlike not to enjoy 'bright colours'. In fact, Alice expresses popular opinions that merged class and gender perceptions, naturalising the upper- and middle-class Angel of the House as pure. Of course, not all unmarried women wore colourless dress at the time; nor did all married women wear colourful attire. After all, the first decade of the twentieth century witnessed a move away from the intense colours of the 1890s. Let us consider the associations of white, though. For instance, Queen Victoria made the white wedding dress popular when she wed Prince Albert in 1840, associating it not only with virginal purity but also royalty, since prior to 1840, brides – but not royal ones – had been wearing white.[52] By the turn of the century, white was also associated with membership in the upper or middle classes, given the limited laundering methods already addressed in the previous chapter in relation to the Loristans' white shirts. Alice, too young to know much (or even anything) about sexuality, sexual activity and loss of virginity, is unaware that marriage in some way implies loss of purity, and has yet not been taught to consider what happens on the wedding night. Alice's literary role models after all have been virginal angels, such as Wilmet Underwood in Charlotte M. Yonge's *The Pillars of the House; or, Under Wode, Under Rode* (1873). The Underwood children, orphaned and dispossessed of their rightful inheritance through a flaw in a will, struggle hard to restore their fortunes. Wilmet, one of these 'pillars' and stern caregiver, at some point gets married, but her purity seems to remain untouched. On her wedding day, the 'snowy soft flow and straight folds of the muslin' express a more distanced, virginal character; and the 'clear pure white folds' Wilmet wears after her marriage (because they please her husband) are certainly very different from Miss Ashleigh's colourful sashes.[53] Maybe we need to consider that Nesbit was no stranger to moral hypocrisy when it came to matters of purity. She was seven months pregnant when she married Bland in 1880, who had just had a child with Maggie Doran, a woman with whom he continued a relationship for

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[50] Briggs, *A Woman of Passion*, p. 67.
[51] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, p. 10.
[52] Otnes and Pleck, *Cinderella Dreams: The Allure of the Lavish Wedding*, p. 31.
[53] Charlotte M. Yonge, The Pillars of the House; or, Under Wode, Under Rode, vol. 1, 2nd ed., digitised edn. (1873; London: Macmillan, 1874), pp. 191-92.

about ten years after his marriage to Nesbit. He had an affair with Nesbit's nurse Alice Hoatson while Nesbit was pregnant with their fourth child, getting Hoatson pregnant while she lived in their home. Hoatson, to avoid scandal, joined the Bland household and passed off the baby as Nesbit's; and while Nesbit discovered only later her husband was the father, she adopted another child Bland had with Hoatson 13 years later. As we can see, women such as Nesbit, Doran and Hoatson were certainly not the pure woman Alice Bastable is thinking of – regardless of what they were wearing. Alice, however, has been taught to adhere to the restrictive social and gender norms that govern the life of former Miss Ashleigh – and that render any divergence from the norm as wrong. Through Alice's almost unnatural disdain of colours, Nesbit illustrates not only the hypocrisy of social beliefs and impositions, but also their oppressiveness, making women (and young girls) feel shame and embarrassment for their sexuality, even if it was safely tucked away under the protective veil of marriage.

The ladies in the Maidstone Antiquarians Society in *Wouldbegoods* are another good example of Nesbit's biting critique of an exaggerated sense of social propriety that fears the removal of socially-imposed identity markers so much it ignores how repressive, even unnatural, these markers are. Priggish Oswald once again serves as Nesbit's mouthpiece, for while he may be critical of what he sartorially (and by extension culturally) does not know, he is just as critical of those who, again as signalled by the way they dress, accept the imposition of an unnatural and thus restrictive identity. Oswald's observation of the sartorial appearance of the prim and proper female members of the Maidstone Antiquarians Society rings with irony:

> The ladies all wore stiff bonnets, and no one took their gloves off, though, of course, it was quite in the country, and it is not wrong to take your clothes off there.[54]

These female Antiquarians have ventured out of urban and enclosed domestic space, by engaging in an open-space digging in the country, but their appearance indicates they fail to acknowledge what exposure to nature and the natural elements implies. For although 'the weather was fiery', these women do not remove a single item of attire.[55] One can only imagine what the ladies will look like after half an hour of digging in the sun, wearing layers of clothes: sweaty, smelly, covered in dirt, and

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[54] Nesbit, *Wouldbegoods*, p. 196.
[55] Nesbit, *Wouldbegoods*, p. 196

certainly not pictures of feminine propriety and femininity. Through Oswald's comment that 'it is not wrong to take your clothes off there', Nesbit explores the effects of such restrictions. Oswald's comment is, on the one hand, childish – taking off your clothes implies nakedness, and nakedness during a social gathering, even in the countryside, was and still is considered inappropriate. Nonetheless, Oswald is making a rational observation rather than a preconceived one. Obviously, he cannot mean what he is saying literally. Yet, he says it as he sees it. What these women are doing is senseless. In his boyish simplicity, he voices the unnaturalness of upholding social rules without consideration of their usefulness and appropriateness. These women are not writing their own identity (as do Mrs. Bax or Mrs. Leslie), but have accepted antiquated fashions and antiquated identities, which results in a repressed existence. In light of the potential influence of Freudian theory, a psychoanalytic reading of the excavation-episode in *Wouldbegoods* renders the ladies' digging as metaphorical: they are delving into the subterranean regions of the soul. The members of the society have come to search for traces of the past, for a time when people and society were, according to the primitivist ideology, better and purer. Through this search, they actually uncover aspects of themselves. There is a parallel here between the excavation outcome and the depiction of the members and their clothes. The excavation only appears successful, for as it turns out, it has been based on lies. What the members find is pottery made by the children as well as two original Roman jugs that, however, belong to Albert's uncle and are not new discoveries. These ladies, who have been digging and sweating in the sun, have ultimately uncovered nothing real or nothing that has not already been uncovered. The implication, here, is that by failing to discard their restrictive clothing (and associated inhibitions), they also fail to make any genuine discovery about themselves.

As we see, dress images in the Bastable books are very significant in critiquing the Victorian '*mores*' that Nesbit had learned, according to Briggs from the Fabians, to evade, 'without losing caste'.[56] Nesbit may not have been vocal in demanding equality and liberties – but she also did not don corsets and stays to make herself acceptable when living the unconventional life that she did. What dress images betray in the Bastable stories is a narrative that criticises these mores, but without triggering too much of a reaction that would lead to a rejection of her ideas. After all, she herself saw how too much (sartorial) progressiveness could boomerang – as when 'It', the literary society she had founded, was shut down when a paper on 'Nudity in Art and Life', presented by socialist Harold Cox, went beyond what (even for a society made up of

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[56] Briggs, *Woman of Passion*, p. 146. Italics in the original.

supposedly forward-thinking individuals) was considered permissible.[57] This might explain why – as we will see in the following section – when it comes to rejecting social restrictions, Nesbit employs the supposedly innocent child figure, steering clear of having any female character showing too much skin.

Undressing: The value of rejecting social restrictions

The adult women in the Bastable books do not take off clothes. No wonder, considering that Cox, according to Noel Griffith, one of Nesbit's admirers, writer and Fabian-member, angered Nesbit when he shocked his audience through his description of a naked woman lying on a tiger skin.[58] The Bastable children might not be naked, but they do doff attire – and when they do, they do so with almost sensual pleasure, conveying the confusing impression that soiling purifies:

> And we had all got our shoes and stockings off […] there is something in the smooth messiness of clay, and not minding how dirty you get, that would soothe the savagest breast that ever beat.[59]

The above quote is a wonderful illustration of how images of apparel in Nesbit's stories express the need for resistance to imposed social norms as well but also admit that such a process can be, though painful, also liberating. Oswald's reference to 'the savagest breast' in the above excerpt from *Wouldbegoods* in fact paraphrases words expressed by Almeria, the daughter of King Manuel of Granada, from William Congreve's *The Mourning Bride* (1697), a play about deception and deceptive appearances. This quote, however, also introduces the image of the child resembling the 'noble savage', uninhibited by restrictions of social decorum, running through a jungle barefoot – and certainly evokes different associations than did Barnardo's pictures of barefoot children discussed in Chapter Two. The term 'noble savage' was first introduced in John Dryden's play *The Conquest of Granada* (1672) and taken up in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writings. The literary image of this 'noble savage', however, exists throughout the centuries and expresses a figure uncorrupted by European civilisation, possessing an innocence lost in civilised cultures. The new

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[57] Briggs, *Woman of Passion*, p. 145.
[58] Briggs, *Woman of Passion*, p. 145.
[59] Nesbit, *Wouldbegoods*, p. 133.

theories of childhood in the eighteenth century involved the child-figure in this mythical conception, as when French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–78) argued that the child was a noble savage, naturally endowed with a sense of virtue, in response to John Locke's (1632-1704) concept of the child as a 'tabula rasa' to be inscribed by adult instruction. The association between the child and the primitive was taken up by avant-garde circles – and by Nesbit, possibly with a subversive twist.[60] Nesbit's conflation of the child and the primitive in this story in fact anticipates Freud's theories expressed in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), which constructed childhood as 'recapitulating the archaic; the childhood of the individual and the primitive beginnings of the race interact', but also revealed the significance of the child's sexuality on adult life.[61] Furthermore, the Bastable children, stripping their attire, in a way also anticipate Havelock Ellis' *Sex in Relation to Society* (1910). This work extols the value of nakedness in art and literature as tool for teaching children the proper attitude towards purity in nature and 'be immunised, as Enderlin [Max Enderlin, a teacher] expresses it, against those representations of the nude which make an appeal to the baser instincts'.[62] Ellis' reasoning was based on the argument that since humans are born naked, nakedness was a natural condition, that the ancient Greeks extolled the symmetry and proportion of the human body, only to be appreciated when naked, and that even from a religious perspective, clothing marked Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden.[63] Possibly, Oswald's mention of 'clay' has also Biblical references, such as Adam's creation with clay and a prelapsarian state of existence, prior to sexual shame and God's anger. In the above quotation, the mention of 'getting dirty' also suggests the notion that this return to a sin-free existence involves breaking social decorum and discarding attire and accessories. The children in this instance, by doffing attire, return to nature and to their origins, beyond the pressures of a civilisation that suppresses instincts.

The intensely liberating sense conveyed through this image becomes clear if we compare it to a dress image in *Treasure Seekers*, when Oswald is yet fully under the control of social rules. Here we see how Oswald, as the oldest boy and the most exposed to a body politics that seeks to regulate his masculinity, only hesitantly questions control. When Dicky asks Oswald whether they will steal out of the house to observe the neighbouring house for the presence of potential coiners, Oswald tells

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[60] Olson, *Children's Culture and the Avant-Garde: Painting in Paris, 1890-1915*, p. 8.
[61] Christopher Butler, *Early Modernism: Literature, Music, and Painting in Europe*, *1900-1916* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 93.
[62] Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Sex in Relation to Society*, vol. vi, digitsed edn. (1910; Philadelphia: F.A. Davies Company, 1913), pp. 89-92.
[63] Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Sex in Relation to Society*, pp. 95-99.

readers that 'I meant to watch, only my collar's rather tight, so I thought I'd take it off first'.[64] The boys want to engage in childish games, to return to the more innocent state of existence, but the collar, symbolising entrance to the world of adulthood and adult manhood, conveys with its tightness literally the stifling tightness of social decorum. Bringing to mind the eponymous hero in *Peter Pan*, Oswald's wish to remove this collar expresses a wish to escape social expectations that command that a proper (older) boy should not engage in games that foster imagination and spontaneity. Yet Oswald in *Treasure Seekers* is too indoctrinated to impulsively doff all attire and enjoy liberty – removing the collar, for him, is a serious decision, laden with meaning.

If we now compare the collar-removal to jacket-removal in the episode where the boys use their clothes to extinguish the fire they accidentally cause, we will realise even more how the Bastable stories, through the figure of the child and its sartorial engagement, gradually develop a narrative which disrupts contemporary discourses that refuse the concept of an independent, self-reflective creation of identity. On the one hand, when both he and his brother 'tore off their jackets' to put out fire, the boys who have been repeatedly exposed as not possessing a united version of masculinity, conform to the masculine paradigm of action and valour.[65] However, this doffing also visualises Oswald's realisation he can doff his external markers of identity and still – or rather thereby – engage in an action (and no longer a game) that allows him to display agency and so-called heroic manliness. Oswald's exclamation that '[t]his is no time to think about your clothes' also suggests that he, a budding representative of the male order, is gradually realising the burning (pun intended) need for breaking free of appearances and acceptance of an imposed identity that does not reflect one's self.[66] Both he and his brother behave heroically, but they do so after removing a symbol of masculinity, the jacket. Oswald's comment that '[t]he jackets were never quite the same again' after the fire suggests that the boys themselves will never again be 'quite the same' either. They have found the courage to assume agency over their actions and identities, and thus have overcome their hesitation to remove the garments that restrict them from exploring their identity. Here, in other words, Oswald has begun questioning his own perception of clothes as markers of identity, and has discovered that his masculinity is embedded within him, not donned on him – and thus, that he has the agency of choosing the version of masculinity he desires. Some might say this episode suggests that the Bastable stories work within the traditional construction of gender

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[64] Nesbit, *Treasure Seekers*, p. 38.
[65] Nesbit, *Wouldbegoods*, p. 135.
[66] Nesbit, *Wouldbegoods*, p. 135.

where boys 'do', while girls only 'imagine'. Undoubtedly, in the fire-episode, the boys extinguish the fire while the girls remain passive; Alice's imagined context of the burning woman further affirms traditional stereotypes of feminised and exaggerated flights of fancy. We have already seen, however, how a reading of the muslin dress contains a much more subversive subtext. Let us now also look at two episodes, keeping contemporary anti-suffrage rhetoric in mind, where sartorial references build up a much more complex picture of Nesbit's position: the episode where the children find a baby and the episode where the children find a dead fox.

In the baby episode, sartorial images can best be understood when also considering Nesbit's equivocal stance towards contemporary and stifling perceptions of femininity. Dora sheds her clothes, just as her brothers did in the fire episode, but then again, it is only to perform a traditionally feminised act of providing nurture and compassion. Yet, her doffing of the petticoat proves fruitless, since she ultimately fails to become the nurturing mother-substitute. For when she removes her 'flannelette petticoat' to cover up the baby, 'the horrid strings got into a hard knot'.[67] On the one hand, we might consider that Dora's failure echoes contemporary fears that increased equality, signified by the desire to remove her petticoat, would lead to decreased interest in fulfilling female duties of child-bearing and child-rearing. On the other, we need to consider that Nesbit herself was not the epitome of the 'ideal' mother, instead leaving her husband's mistress, Hoatson, in charge of her family while she pursued her literary career. Might these strings express the strings of social expectations, imposed upon women from childhood by their mothers? Certainly, when the strings are described as 'hard' and inflexible, it is hard not view them as an obstacle, preventing expression of self. Dora's failed attempt to cut these strings with Oswald's knife further illustrates the frustrating effect of these expectations. When she 'plunged her hand into Oswald's jacket pocket' to get the knife, instead of waiting for Oswald to give it to her, she finds the pocket full of 'meal-worms' and starts screaming.[68] This image is amusing, but also interesting, especially considering Oswald's remark that she ought 'to have known that a man always carries his knife in his trouser pocket and not in his jacket one'.[69] Obviously, once again we have high-sounding Oswald betraying his victimisation that has led him to deny his child nature, symbolised by the worm-content, and willingly accept a non-individualised, imposed version of what masculinity should 'always' mean. Similarly, Dora's failure to free herself and become this nurturer is exposed as

[67] Nesbit, *Wouldbegoods*, p. 160.
[68] Nesbit, *Wouldbegoods*, p. 160.
[69] Nesbit, *Wouldbegoods*, p. 160.

the result of being stifled not only by imposed expectations concerning her sex but also by imposed ignorance of the opposite sex. Dora, adhering to strict gender binaries, is also too removed from the daily life of the male sex to free herself from her learned feminine identity. Thus, it is not that Dora represents through her unorthodox doffing the threat to the image of woman-as-mother, associated with the suffrage movement. Rather, this sartorial image presents the learned feminine identity as an incapacitating one: Dora fails in her feminine role, unable even to cover the baby.

Even more fascinating is the highly complex petticoat image in the episode where the children come across a dead fox while pretending to be foxhunting. First, this dress image expresses resistance to the feminine ideal her husband, Hubert Bland, perpetuated: a creature not existing in 'the realm of […] the brain and the intelligence'.[70] According to Bland, woman's sole purpose was 'to inspire romantic passion', best achieved by 'wearing corsets' that allowed women 'to appear what, in fact, she is not'.[71] Second, dress images in the fox episode associate male structures of authority with female abuse. In this episode, parental and social strings are metaphorically cut, and the children overtly question existing structures of authority. Once again, Dora wishes to remove her clothes, and this time she is successful. Initially, her act seems futile, given that when she removes 'her petticoats to wrap the fox', the fox is dead.[72] However, let us take a closer look at these petticoats which are, as we remember Oswald telling us, so useful. The removal of petticoats in a forest to cover up a dead animal is quite radical. This forest is outside the feminised realm of domestic space and, as already discussed, is the closest the children can get to the wild jungle where they can supposedly go savage and escape social corruption. Thus, once again we see expressed the need to resist the body politics that naturalise an idealised feminine identity. In fact, within Butler's framework of gender and performativity, Dora's doffing of the petticoat can be read as exposing gender as a series of stylised acts within 'a highly rigid regulatory frame […] to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being'.[73]

The fox and its function in the development of this dress image is highly significant in Nesbit's engagement with the position of women in society. The fox, the victim of hunting or poaching, visualises the taking of a life done by men and in contrast to women's life-giving abilities. Dora's wrapping-up of the dead body in her

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[70] Bland, 'If I Were a Woman', p. 209
[71] Bland, 'The Honest Woman', pp. 254-57.
[72] Nesbit, *Wouldbegoods*, pp. 173-74.
[73] Bulter, *Gender Trouble*, pp. 43-44.

petticoat distorts the image of female life-giving motherhood, but Oswald claims she 'look[ed] just the same outside afterwards'.[74] Thus, what we see, once again, is resistance to the misleading delimitation of women as Angels of the House, resistance to what Butler calls 'the various forces that police the social appearance of gender'.[75] Another consideration is that while the petticoat removal may not provide nurture, it provides a much more practical function: by becoming 'stained with the gore of the departed', it allows the children to avoid 'bloodying our jackets'.[76] Dora, in other words, achieves through her undressing a rejection of the stereotype where only boys 'do', and becomes involved in the much more 'bloody' business of reality, but without, metaphorically, soiling herself. Oswald's commentary on her attire in this episode, in fact, adds social commentary to this proposed rejection:

> Girls' clothes are silly in one way, but I think they are useful too. A boy cannot take off more than his jacket and waistcoat in any emergency, or he is at once entirely undressed.[77]

Oswald here is obviously playing upon contemporary women's fashion dictates, satirising the restrictive fashion of many-layered clothes Nesbit sought to reject. However, he is also advocating the need for women to accept a more involved position within society, exploiting their restricted position as much as possible to engage with a social 'emergency'. The fox is dead, after all, because it 'has been shot through the brain', and even if its shooting was an accident, the fox has been the victim of human hunting, the wilful termination of another life. We also need to consider that the fox is often referred to as vermin, considered by many as undesirable, and is often also used metaphorically as a symbol of cunning and deceit. In this instance, Nesbit might be using it as a representative of all the disenfranchised (maybe female) individuals who were, during her time, denigrated and marginalised. This association may seem far-fetched, but the sentimental description of the children's reactions upon finding the dead fox, the reference to its babies as well as the magistrate's cold treatment of the fox's body, make the fox episode so poignant that it is hard to believe this heartbreak is supposed to visualise the pain of animal so denigrated. In fact, one more dress image conveys that the magistrate, who so unsympathetically accuses the children of having

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[74] Nesbit, *Wouldbegoods*, p. 174.
[75] Bulter, *Gender Trouble*, p.44.
[76] Nesbit, *Wouldbegoods*, pp. 180, 174.
[77] Nesbit, *Wouldbegoods*, p. 174.

killed the fox, functions as a representative of the male order that prevents women, at times violently, from writing their own narrative. The petticoat, we need to remember, is a piece of underwear – and at the time, women were even more concerned than today for their underwear not to be seen. When the magistrates appropriates Dora's petticoat by 'spreading out the petticoat under' the dead fox, he metaphorically violates the girl's intimate sphere.[78] Such metaphoric abuse of a child, and a girl for that, brings to mind the violent reactions to suffrage demands at the time.[79] Furthermore, might we find here also an echo of Bland's comparison of women to dogs when he rejected suffrage by exclaiming 'Votes for women? Votes for children! Votes for dogs!'?[80] Obviously, victimising a dog in a children's book would shock child readers, then and now; possibly, the figure of the fox was more neutral, owing to established fox hunting practices. Thus, possibly standing in for the dog, but also the child and the woman, this fox might visualise the fierce reactions to women's attempts at suffrage and the painful consequences of such reactions. So, let us return to Oswald's description of women's clothes as more 'useful' since woman have many more layers of clothes to remove before they are 'undressed'. Read within Butler's theory of performativity, this description suggests, subversively, that there are options for women to circumvent the social policing that marginalises them and even to enact change by exposing the social constructedness of gender, without becoming socially exposed to and prevented by accepted structures of authority – bringing to mind Nesbit herself, who might not openly have questioned patriarchal dictates but who certainly lived an unconventional life.

As we see, the adult female characters might not offend through sartorial choices in these stories, but the child characters are certainly not reticent in removing their attire. And this doffing and stripping of attire by children that are supposedly more innocent needs to be understood as a significant element of her stories – contributing to a discursive resistance to late Victorian and early Edwardian dominant discourses that contributed to, in a Foucauldian sense, social cohesion. The Bastable children will not accept subjecting their bodies to social control and, in Giddens' framework, take their first (albeit not yet reflective) steps in determining who they want to be. Some might argue that when Oswald is depicted as musing over his realisation that 'I have known Dora take off two petticoats for useful purposes and look just the same outside afterwards', Nesbit perpetuates the traditional paradigm that saw women as possessing a

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[78] Nesbit, *Wouldbegoods*, p. 180.
[79] Nesbit, *Wouldbegoods*, p. 180.
[80] Gerald Gould, reviewing Doris Langley Moore's biography in *Week-End Review*, 28.1.1933, in Briggs, *Woman of Passion*, p. 361.

more fixed gender identity.[81] In fact, however, this comment again directs attention to the senselessness of social restrictions, particularly for women – and should by no means be considered as implying that Nesbit agreed with this view. In the previous paragraph we saw how dress images suggest ways of negotiating resistance to expectations by employing exactly those social and sartorial impositions that sought to prevent resistance. In this instance, we also see critique of these impositions, exposing the senselessness of hiding the female body under heavy and restrictive layers of dress, given that it is possible to remove two layers without any difference being visible. Furthermore, by emphasising that women wear much more attire, Nesbit suggests that the associated restrictions, be they physical, moral or social, are manifestly greater, and much more stifling, than restrictions imposed upon men, since the latter metaphorically have only 'jacket and waistcoat' to remove. Certainly, when Dora doffs her petticoat, she shows refusal to become another 'docile' body; her sartorial actions here in fact expose that, in Butler's terms, her gender has become the '*effect* of a regulatory regime of gender differences' created through fashion constraints that require constant repetition.[82] Bland may have influenced Nesbit, but in her stories, dress images indicate that this influence was limited mostly to what Nesbit openly said. For in fact, dress images repeatedly show that her stories, anticipating such post-modernist theorists as Giddens, question an attempted naturalisation of a predetermined and imposed gender identity repeatedly. There is another future ahead for these children, who realise they can doff attire without incurring serious consequences, a future where they themselves will be able to determine who they want to be. Furthermore, the exploration of the sartorial images contained in the Bastable books reveals that Nesbit's stories contain even more fascinating subtext – for, as we will see in the next section, images of dressing-up and cross-dressing function in these stories to disrupt the naturalisation of the polarised gender categories themselves, thus also anticipating theorists such as Butler.

Cross-dressing and dressing-up: The possibility of identity transgression

Indeed, the Bastable siblings, employing the liberties granted to childhood as both more unsullied and more primitive, do more than doff jackets or petticoats and reject an

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[81] Nesbit, *Wouldbegoods*, p. 174.
[82] Judith Butler, 'Critically Queer', p. 21. Italics in the original.

imposed identity. As we will see, Nesbit increasingly employs the child figure and its dress to address an even more progressive notion, one her adult characters cannot without becoming too radical for their time: that identity is polymorphic. As we saw, Mrs. Bax and Mrs. Leslie come dangerously close to crossing the gender divide with their voices and their smoking – but we also saw that sartorial images ultimately contribute to preventing them from crossing this divide, from escaping a Foucauldian control of their bodies that naturalises them, ultimately, as feminine. In this section, we will examine how images of Oswald's and H. O.'s cross-dressing in *New Treasure Seekers* visualise that since identity is a personal narrative, it cannot fit into pre-constructed categories. As we will see, in this book Nesbit joins contemporary progressive discourses on the self by allowing readers to realise, along with the Bastable children, the richness of experiencing a self that does not allow society to rule it.

Elasticity of identity is in fact already suggested in *Treasure Seekers*. Remember that Oswald wonders how Albert can 'bear' it? The word 'bear' implies choice and hence that Albert has, involuntarily or voluntarily, chosen to explore a feminised and non-English identity. On the surface, once again Nesbit appears conventional, given that masculinity emerges as oppositional and superior to femininity, thus corroborating the notion of masculine supremacy. However, why not consider that through the depiction of Albert as oscillating between boyish and girlish, and between English-non-English appearance, the text imagines identity as a continuum, with Albert oscillating between genders and nationalities? The editor's assumption that Oswald could be the poet also suggests plasticity of identity. To recall Laura Mulvey's concept of the 'male gaze', Oswald becomes the passive object of the gaze and the editor becomes the 'active bearer of the look', controlling the situation through his decision to publish the poem or not. Oswald's identity becomes malleable, controlled by the editor and thus no longer an immutable constant, inherently determined by class, gender and nationality. And just as Oswald's gaze strips Albert's identity of its fixedness and specificity by critiquing his attire, so now the editor strips Oswald of his gender identity by ignoring the masculinity Oswald believes is conveyed through his clothes and appearance. In *Wouldbegoods*, we saw how images of doffing and tearing up clothes show the children increasingly realising what responsibilities growing up entails, how it necessitates the acceptance of a limited and imposed self-identity they might not desire – and as struggling to refuse the control of their bodies and selves. To understand the rich meaning of cross-dress in *New Treasure Seekers*, however, we need first to understand the associations with cross-dressing contained in the excavation episode in *Wouldbegoods*, discussed previously.

The excavation is introduced as having been inspired by Charlotte M. Yonge's *The Daisy Chain*, already briefly discussed in the previous chapter. This is a novel Oswald refers to quite disparagingly and a novel that is constructed as gender-specific fiction suitable for one particular sex through Oswald's description as 'a first-rate book for girls and *little* boys', with 'little' suggesting that boy readers are still too young to have a developed a delimited gender identity.[83] If we recall that literary references in Nesbit's stories often function to express critique, Oswald's reference to, and disparagement of, this novel obviously requires further attention.[84] *Daisy Chain*, in fact, contains only one cross-dressing episode where '[o]ne of the boys dresses up like a lady and comes to call, and another tries to hit his little sister with a hoe. It's jolly fine'.[85] What happens in this episode is that young Harry May cross-dresses as Miss Walkingham to become privy to the social gossip about his family, and while his siblings are not convinced about the assumed identity, they at no point doubt the assumed gender. His cross-dressing, in fact, is so successful that it terrifies his ailing sister Margaret and consequently causes severe discord among father and son. In *Wouldbegoods*, no information is provided about this cross-dressing, and while Nesbit's adult readers may be expected to have read the story in their youth, this is not necessarily the case for the younger ones. Yet, regardless of whether they had or had not read the book, cross-dressing is associated with erroneousness and violence. However, we need to remember that this association is expressed by Oswald, the boy who so desperately wishes that identity were stable and immutable and who is then proven as having been deceived. This suggests that the reader is being told that Oswald's evaluation of this cross-dressing is mistaken. And in *New Treasure Seekers*, it is Oswald himself who cross-dresses and illustrates that transgression is not an act associated with violence, deserving to be punished. Rather, it serves to expose, to use Butler's theory, the socially constructed nature of gender.

Initially, Oswald's cross-dressing to help Albert's uncle appears to be depicted in what, if we recall, Victoria Flanagan refers to a carnivalesque manner, and hence as intended to confirm established gender patterns. The uncle, enraptured by his bride, has failed to produce work of literary merit and has gotten into trouble with his editor. When the children write to the editor praising Albert's uncle and he does not respond, they decide to visit him, disguised as adults to be taken seriously. However, Oswald has to discover that his guise of an adult male, with a 'beard [...] and a hat of Father's' is

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[83] Nesbit, *Wouldbegoods*, p. 190. Italics mine.
[84] Briggs, *A Woman of Passion*, p. 402.
[85] Nesbit, *Wouldbegoods*, p. 190.

wholly unconvincing, since he looks like a 'horrible dwarf'.[86] One can only imagine how horrifying it must be for Oswald to realise not only that he is not as manly as he has been taught to believe, but also to accept his siblings' idea of being 'disguised in women's raiments'.[87] His description of the visit to the editor certainly is highly amusing and, on the surface, undoubtedly also quite carnivalesque in the sense that it suggests only a mocking challenge of established gender patterns through its impossibility of permanence:

> No man ever wants to be a woman, and it was a bitter thing for Oswald's pride […] You have no idea what it is like to wear petticoats, especially long ones. I wonder that ladies continue to endure their miserable existences. The top parts of the clothes, too, seemed to be too tight and too loose in the wrong places […] They put a large hat, with a very tight elastic band behind, on to Oswald's head […] and then, with a tickly, pussyish featherish thing round his neck, hanging down in long ends, he looked more young-lady-like than he will ever feel.[88]

As in the typical male-to-female cross-dressing tale discussed by Flanagan, Oswald concedes to cross-dress against his will but experiences such significant discomfort that he is unable to occupy the female subject position for long. In carnivalesque humour, we learn how Oswald's 'ears got hotter and hotter, and it got more and more difficult to manage his feet and hands', while the editor 'looked at Oswald's boots'.[89] In these boots is inscribed his masculine gender but Oswald, unconsciously or not, has 'neglected to cover over with his petticoats' these boots.[90] Ultimately and read within a Bakhtinian framework, the temporary topsy-turvy world of gender anarchy is at an end when 'the elastic finished slipping up Oswald's head […] the hat leapt from his head' and Oswald confesses '[c]oncealment […] is at an end'.[91] Alice's '[w]e are not what we seem' is in this instance very telling, since her disguise from female child to female adult is not questioned or ridiculed – it is only Oswald's attempt to disguise from male child to female adult that causes the editor (and probably

[86] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, p. 130.
[87] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, p. 130.
[88] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, pp. 130-31.
[89] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, p. 131.
[90] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, p. 131.
[91] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, pp. 134-35.

also the reader) to laugh.[92] And read in the context of Flanagan's male-to-female cross-dressing, we could well argue that indeed, Oswald's cross-dressing not only has a comical function, but by being derisive of femininity, enforces the conservative model of the male being naturally superior.

Careful engagement with Oswald's cross-dressing through reference to Butler's theories, indicates, however, that despite these carnivalesque undertones, neither the female subject-position nor feminine subjectivity is denigrated as happens according to Flanagan in other cross-dressing narratives. In fact, besides being amusing and illustrating a child's imagination, cross-dressing allows Nesbit to explore the enforced but also slippery nature of gender identity. Only imagine how Oswald, the boy who supposedly has been successfully inoculated with the appropriate masculine identity, feels when he discovers (once again) that who we are is not always reflected in who we *want* to be or *appear* to be. Temporarily wearing a woman's dress, Oswald discovers that appearances can be deceiving, and that biological sex does not imply a visible gender identity. After all, the text does state he looks 'young-lady-like', even if he does not feel it. Oswald's relatively successful masquerade into the opposite sex is also expressed in the two illustrations of this episode (Figures 5.2 and 5.3).[93] In the first illustration of cross-dressed Oswald, he is seen only from behind, and it is here where image tells a different story than words. Text and caption state that both cab-driver and porter 'wink' because they see through Oswald's masquerade owing to the boots, but what the reader gets to see, in fact, is a figure that might well be a woman, especially since the boots are not clearly to be seen (Figure 5.2).[94] In the next illustration, the reader is shown that the editor looks at Oswald's boots (which are visible now) – but Oswald's pictorial visualisation certainly is that of a young woman and not of a young man, with especially the facial features being extremely non-masculine (Figure 5.3).

[92] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, p. 134.
[93] Illustrations from *New Treasure Seekers* are taken from *New Treasure Seekers*, digitised edn. (1904; London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1925), illustrations by Gordon Browne and Lewis Baumer [accessed 10.1.2013].
[94] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, pp. 131, 201.

OSWALD SAW THE DRIVER WINK AS HE PUT HIS BOOT ON THE STEP, AND THE PORTER WHO WAS OPENING THE CAB DOOR WINKED BACK.
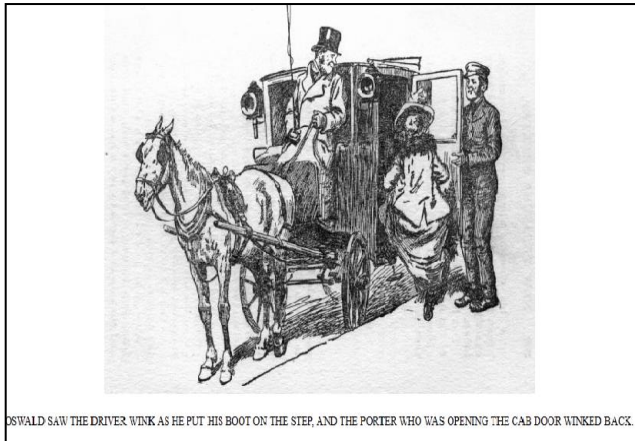
Figure 5.2: Illustration by Gordon Browne and Lewis Baumer, in Edith Nesbit's *New Treasure Seekers* (1904), p. 201
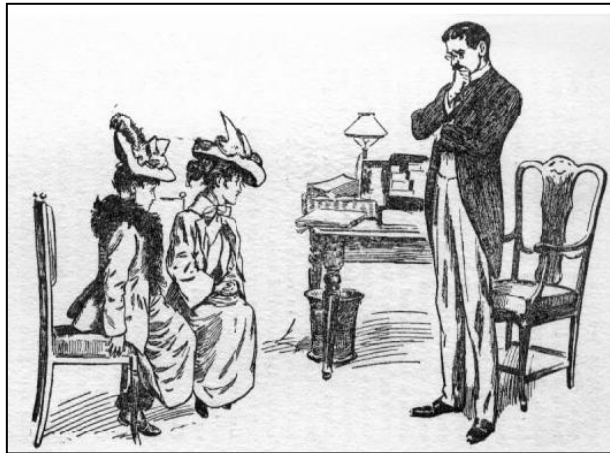
Figure 5.3: Illustration by Gordon Browne and Lewis Baumer, in Edith Nesbit's *New Treasure Seekers* (1904), p. 203

It is true that in both illustrations, Oswald appears to have short hair, something which might be considered as betraying that he is a boy and suggesting that gender identity cannot be hidden. However, given that Nesbit herself had short hair, the visible depiction of Oswald's short hair might be considered a playful way of subversively drawing attention to the deceptiveness of enforced and delimiting appearances. Application of Butler's theory of performativity allows us to read both verbal and pictorial text as depicting Oswald performing self-consciously a role, by conforming to behaviours and appearances traditionally ascribed to the feminine gender. When Oswald is portrayed as metaphorically failing to don the feminine gender, the story foregrounds the performative aspects of gender and exposes the constraints that construct gender.

For indeed, it has to be taken into account that Oswald's feelings of discomfort are located in the restrictive nature of female clothing, and hence, on a more symbolic level, the restrictive nature of gender-expectations and social constructions, not in the assumed gender – as Flanagan argues is the case in the male-to-female cross-dressing paradigm.[95] For when Oswald admits, 'no slow passage of years, however many, can ever weaken Oswald's memory of what those petticoats were like to walk in', he does not connote gender anxiety, but as in the fox-episode, critiques the constrictive effects of female fashion – and, thus, imposed femininity.[96] Echoes of the alternative orthodoxy around sexual freedom that was at the time signalled by fashion are then expressed when Oswald admits he cannot forget 'how ripping it was to get out of them, and have your own *natural* legs again'.[97]

Let us look at two more instances of cross-dressing, placed in what appear to be playful episodes of dressing-up, but which also convey the beauty of going beyond established boundaries while writing one's self-narrative as well as once again exposing the constructed nature of appearance. When the children toward the end of *New Treasure Seekers* dress up as gypsies with clothes they find in an attic, this attic is described as 'bare and tidy as the rest of the house'.[98] This suggests the organised and constrained world of propriety and decorum, while the 'clean towel' covering the box containing the clothes that will allow them to experiment with their identity metaphorically conveys society's attempts to deny the possibility of transgression.[99] However, the Bastable children no longer accept such denials and remove the towel, metaphorically also unfolding the richness, intricacy and beauty of identity:

[95] Victoria Flanagan, 'Reframing Masculinity', p. 79.
[96] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, pp. 134-35.
[97] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, pp. 134-35. Italics mine.
[98] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, p. 175.
[99] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, p. 175.

In the right on the top there was a scarlet thing, embroidered heavily with gold. It proved, on unfolding, to be a sort of coat, like a Chinaman's. We lifted it out and laid it on the towel on the floor. And then the full glories of that box were revealed. There were cloaks and dresses and skirts and scarves, of all colours of a well-chosen rainbow, and all made of the most beautiful silks and stuffs, with things worked on them with silk, as well as chains of beads and many lovely ornaments.[100]

H. O. is then depicted as cross-dressing without any carnivalesque undertones, donning 'a lady's blouse of mouse-coloured silk, embroidered with poppies. It came down to his knees and a jewelled belt kept it in place'.[101] There is no burlesque humour to be found, described by Flanagan as existing in the male-to-female cross-dressing paradigm. H. O. is not forced to wear this attire and does not suffer any sort of humiliation while wearing it. One might say that this ease of cross-dressing can be explained through contemporary perceptions of young boys as not having developed a specific gender identity yet. It might also be explained through Oswald's mention of H. O. being '*able*' to don female attire, playing upon to contemporary fashion for young boys that permitted a certain extent of feminisation, as discussed in Chapter Two.[102] Such a reading would imply that H.O.'s donning of dress does not constitute cross-dress and as such does not pose any challenge to established gender patterns. However, a closer interrogation, once again through reference to Butler, of what the older boys don allows for valuable insight as it suggests a blurring and thus a questioning of both gender and national boundaries. Oswald's dress-up is particularly interesting if one recalls his disdain of Albert's frills and laces, and his cross-dressing experience for the editor. Oswald, apparently no longer governed by small-mindedness and insecurity, seems to have recognised how norms and attitudes are internalised and can be considered to be consciously resisting. And such a reading implies that Oswald's depiction diverges from what Flanagan describes as the classic and non-subversive male-to-female paradigm. Oswald initially does not appear to cross-dress at all. Rather, the description of his 'white shirt and flannel knee-breeches' plays upon contemporary fashion requirements for proper little middle-class English boys, such as the sailor

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[100] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, pp. 175-76.
[101] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, p. 177.
[102] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, p. 177. Italics mine.

suit.[103] Yet, the 'brick-coloured scarf' for 'his middle part' and 'a green one […] for a turban' disrupt this image of English identity by bringing to mind a Moorish toreador, while the 'sparkling brooch with pink stones in it' mischievously feminises this appearances.[104] First, it should be noted that just as in H. O.'s case, carnivalesque undertones are absent since Oswald is not obliged to don turban, scarf, stones and brooch nor encounters public ridicule. Second, turban, scarf, stones and brooch construct Oswald, in Butler's terms, almost in drag, engaging in a performance, almost a parody; the fact that he also wears conventional attire for boys highlights the disjunction between the body and both gender and national identity. Of course, if we recall Butler's argument that [p]arody by itself is not subversive', we might well say that Oswald's mixing of attire only humorously calls into question existing hierarchies, ultimately reinforcing them, with the breeches and the shirt stressing that Oswald remains a boy beneath the accessories.[105] However, the already noted absence of carnivalesque humour, alongside this stark contrast between Oswald's clothes and accessories, can very well be read as disrupting the discourses that repeat gender norms and construct gender. If we also recall Butler's claim that there are '*racializing norms*' that are expressed through gender, we might well say here that Oswald's appearance, combining fashion elements from different nations and cultures, which cannot be fitted into any one category, draws attention to the constructedness of not only gender, but also national, identity and thus destabilises concepts of identity.[106] For Oswald, in this almost-drag outfit, is at this instance performing that which he is not. And the suggestion is that Oswald has realised and is now exposing that he does not need to accept an imposed version of Edwardian and British masculine identity that requires, among other things, loss of the imaginative self. And to recall Giddens, this insight grants Oswald awareness of the performativity of himself and greater freedom to experiment as he writes his self-identity into existence. What the reader is granted is awareness that identity is not essential and can be disrupted if an end is put to enforced and stylised behaviours.

And when in the fortune-telling episode Oswald and his brothers take this experimentation even further by covering themselves with veils and pretending to be 'attendants – mutes' who can only play some music on flutes, we recognise that the seemingly innocent childish banter alerts to the hypocrisy of socio-political discourse

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[103] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, p. 176.
[104] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, p. 176.
[105] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 176.
[106] Butler, *Bodies that Matter,* p.182.

that insists on essentialising identity and denies self-actualisation.[107] When Noël claims that just as you have to be a 'puppy before you're a dog', he is obviously stating a natural fact.[108] When, however, he adds that, similarly, you 'have to be a prince before you're a king', we see that even this young boy has already become the victim of the conservative discourse that regulates identity, equating natural boundaries with social ones.[109] Yet, Dora openly questions this assumption by referring to the King of Sweden. This might be a reference to Jean Baptiste Jules Bernadotte (1763-1844), born in France and with French ancestry, who became the Swedish King, Charles XIV John, not because of lineage but because King Charles XIII of Sweden had no heir.[110] The children, in other words, have realised that social identity is not naturally inherent, but constructed – and that it is up to them how they want to construct it. And, as we will see, the image of the veil visualises that both boys and girls have arrived at a point where they question, besides established concepts of gender, also those of national and religious identity. In fact, this episode brings to mind Butler's assertion that race, sexuality and gender are interconnected.[111] For what we see is white, Christian masculine identity being destabilised. The boys, feminised through their dress, are now also placed into a position of inferiority and subservience through their muteness as well as blindness owing to the 'veils' they wear, while the flute suggests that the boy engage in a behavioural performance of femininity.[112] These veils can be seen as a potent symbol of Muslim religion and customs, addressed previously through Oswald's statement that Aunt Margaret is not a 'Turquoise' who accepts her husband to treat her as a possession and have 'lots of wives'.[113] Certainly, these boys have moved far beyond the Edwardian masculine identity Oswald so passionately envisioned in the first Bastable book and differentiated, for instance, from the Chinese identity.

In fact, the veil-reference makes it hard not to wonder whether Nesbit, the woman who had affairs and expressed the desire to leave her husband on more than one occasion, but never did, is not thinking of herself at this instance.[114] Let us for one moment return to the 'Turquoise' reference as his disparaging attitude, considering also that Nesbit accepted that her husband had lovers, one of whom lived with them in an

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[107] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, p. 184.
[108] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, p. 182.
[109] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, p. 182.
[110] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, p. 182. 'Charles XIV John', *Encyclopædia Britannica Online.* Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2013.
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/107277/Charles-XIV-John> [accessed 2.7.2013].
[111] Butler, *Bodies that Matter,* p.182.
[112] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, p.180.
[113] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, p.122.
[114] Briggs, *Woman of Passion*, p.104&p.249.

almost bigamous relationship, and had children with those lovers. Read in this light, Oswald's remark draws attention to the hypocritical nature of a supposedly superior English morality, exposing it as prohibiting polygamy only in theory. We need to remember that Nesbit used her child characters to express what she did not overtly dare to say or do, despite her independent life style. When Alice – in contrast to the boys – removes the veil, she indicates she will accept neither concealment of body nor a double standard that denies her the sexual freedom granted to men. And, by doing so, Alice does what Nesbit only dreamed of when she proposed to run off with George Bernard Shaw or Wallis Budge, but ultimately remained as a 'Tourquoise' in her *ménage-a-trois* with Bland and Hoatson.

Conclusion

As we saw in the previous chapter, clothes in Burnett's stories may repeatedly affirm the existence of an inherent class identity, but also alert to the problematic nature of a rigid and predetermined class system, and construct the possibility of an identity continuum. So, is there a significant difference in meaning to which sartorial images in Nesbit's stories alert? After all, the Bastable children, through their engagement with attire, also invite the reader to explore the impossibility of categorising identity through symbolic markers of identity, clothes.

The difference between Burnett and Nesbit, however, is that dress images construct a more complex and more radical narrative, built up gradually through the three stories and to be understood only by putting the stories together, reading them chronologically. We need to remember that these books are the result of stories published separately, and not necessarily in the same order the episodes in the books are narrated. For instance, chapters I, II and VII of *Treasure Seekers* resulted from Nesbit's writing-up of stories she had written in her childhood during October 1896 and September 1897 for the *Girl's Own Paper*.[115] For the sequel, Nesbit once again restructured episodes narrated in 'My School-Days' (October 1896-September 1897) and published in the *Girl's Own Paper*; adding also stories she wrote for *Pall Mall Magazine* and the *Illustrated London News*.[116] *New Treasure Seekers* in 1904 was the result of further Bastable stories published

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[115] Briggs, *A Woman of Passion*, p. 185.
[116] Briggs, *A Woman of Passion*, pp. 183; 214-15.

in a range of magazines.[117] It is only once Nesbit stitches the stories together that the complex, subversive narrative truly emerges, teaching Nesbit's child readers valuable lessons about Edwardian society. This society, in which they supposedly cannot control their environment since they are, on the one hand, marginalised as immature children, and on the other, policed as prospective adults, is exposed as hypocritical and destructive. The painful and impoverishing results of acquiescence are exposed once Oswald, in Butler's terms, becomes aware of the cultural inscriptions of identity on his body. As he finally understands, only when one is 'not starched and booted and stiffened and tightened', but instead wears 'second-best' attire, the one that does not pretend to express the appropriate identity, that 'human feeling' is experienced.[118] It is this feeling, attained through a deliberate narration of the self that exposes and disregards expectations and norms, which allows people to become part of a vibrant and healthy social whole that does not denigrate or reject to maintain so-called superiority. It is true, Butler argues that gender cannot be donned or doffed at will – but she also stresses the existence of agency that allows for the subversion of discourses that inscribe identity. And images of an almost irreverent stripping and cross-dressing repeatedly suggest that they are, in a Giddensian sense, in control of a narrative that is much more liberal or radical than accepted.

In Burnett's stories, instead, the children might be said to be engaging in less of a writing, and more of an editing. Their narrative remains within socially acceptable boundaries and does not diverge too much from the constructions society imposes. Sara and Mary, Cedric and Marco, unlike the Bastable children, ultimately express who they are through their dress (showing respect for fashion dictates of age and class), not by doffing it; and unlike the Bastable children, these children do not toy with unorthodox ideas about sexual freedom by engaging in cross-dressing. It is only indirectly that dress images construct identity as malleable. In contrast, when Oswald, Alice, Noël and their other siblings increasingly, and increasingly *consciously*, use dress as they write their self-narrative, the Bastable stories quite openly construct not only a malleable identity, but also a rather unconventional. And as we will see in the following chapter, Beatrix Potter's stories contribute their share to further complicating contemporary discourses on the self by using extensive sartorial references.

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[117] Briggs, *A Woman of Passion*, p. 215.
[118] Nesbit, *New Treasure Seekers*, p. 208.

Chapter 6

Beatrix Potter

'Peter', – said little Benjamin, in a whisper – 'who has got your clothes?'[1]

Introduction

This question, posed in *The Tale of Benjamin Bunny* (1904), seems straightforward; so does the answer, since, as Potter's readers will know, it is Farmer McGregor who dressed up a scarecrow with the attire Peter Rabbit doffed in *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1904) to escape being captured by the farmer while trespassing.[2] My argument, however, is that when his cousin Benjamin Bunny poses this question, he in fact addresses much more complex issues. For the Bastable children, as we just saw, clothes were frequently bothersome, especially if they had no practical use; and their undressing expressed escape not only from sartorial conventions but also from social restrictions. For many of Potter's discursive animals, on the other hand, doffing attire has a different meaning. In *Peter Rabbit*, Peter's mother allows Peter and his sisters to go out and play, but she warns them to avoid trouble and, most of all, avoid Farmer McGregor's garden where the farmer killed their father. Peter, unlike his sisters, however, does exactly the opposite and enters the garden. Detected by the farmer, Peter leaves behind his attire, much to his mother's displeasure. Such nakedness, according to figures like Havelock Ellis, could connote innocence, symmetry and natural beauty. But quite unlike Oswald Bastable, Peter does not celebrate this new nakedness. On the contrary, in *Benjamin Bunny*, Peter still longs for his attire and returns, with Benjamin's encouragement, to the garden and retrieves his clothes, much to his mother's delight.

The implications are of Peter's relationship with clothes are intriguing. Yet, as already discussed in the Introduction, while some critics have acknowledged the importance of attire in this and other Potter stories, it is surprising that most scholarship argues that dress serves to make readers forget the animal nature of the characters and become emotionally involved. For instance, critics such as Carole Scott claim that clothes increase the reader's involvement and arouse empathy for the characters, with

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[1] Potter, *The Tale of Benjamin Bunny*, in *Further Tales* (1904), pp. 61-87 (p.66). Hereafter referred to in text, illustrations and footnotes as *Benjamin Bunny*.
[2] Potter, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, in *Selected Tales from Beatrix Potter* (1902; Middlesex: W. H. Smith, 1987), pp. 9-36. Hereafter referred to in text, illustrations and footnotes as *Peter Rabbit* & *Selected Tales* respectively.

dress linking her realistically-drawn animals to human emotions; Margaret Joan Blount contends that a child reader will forget these creatures are animals transposed into a more innocent mental landscape.[3] However, such readings ignore the fact that close examination of verbal and visual dress images indicates that, surprisingly, Potter does *not* allow the reader to forget her characters' underlying animal nature. For instance, in the first illustration to *Peter Rabbit*, the rabbits appear to have been caught unaware by the illustrator's pen, while going about their natural rabbit existence (Figure 6.1). When Potter has this rabbit family leave its burrow, don clothes and engage in human activities, it seems almost unnatural. The emphasis on the rabbits' 'animalness' continues throughout the story, as when Potter grants Peter escape from his father's fate by stripping him of his clothes (Figure 6.2). Why would Potter repeatedly expose Peter's 'rabbitness' if she wanted readers to forget it? Could such emphasis on an underlying 'animalness', also found in other stories, indicate that Arcadian readings might be ignoring some of the subtleties, complexities, even paradoxes?

This study argues that this emphasis on 'animalness' draws attention to social and natural rules and suggests that Potter's stories echo socio-political developments of the *fin-de-siècle*. Potter's expert eye as a naturalist allowed her to employ animal characters in her exploration of the tremendous changes occurring around her. Her journal shows she took a considerable interest in animals, keeping pets such as mice and rats, rabbits and lizards, observing and drawing them. Growing up at a time when Darwin's ideas were highly influential, she was exposed to questions of whether humans were superior to animals, whether humans might degenerate into a lower state of being or animals progress into a superior one. Numerous instances in her journal suggest she might have considered the divide between humans and animals much less pronounced, as when she refers to animals as persons, such as 'that graceless person Tomby the dog' and 'the lady in question' that is a squirrel; even plants are anthropomorphised, given that she describes 'the little tiny fungus people singing and bobbing and dancing'.[4] In her stories, both child and adult animal characters possess agency, don dress and attempt to access a socio-biological realm to which they naturally do not belong. To use terminology from the Linnaean taxonomic system (1735) with which Potter, a naturalist whose paper was presented before the Linnaean society in 1869, surely was familiar, animals, belonging to the same biological class as humans, are depicted as also struggling to belong to the same *socio-economic* class.

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[3] Scott, 'Clothed in Nature', pp. 84-85; Blount, 'Dressed Animals', pp. 137-38.
[4] Potter, '1892 Birnam, Tuesday, September 6th'; '1895 Sawrey, Saturday, August 8th'; '1896 Sawrey, Tuesday, November 17th', in Linder, *Journal*, pp. 417; 422-23 (p. 422).

Figure 6.1: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix Potter's
Peter Rabbit (1902), p. 10
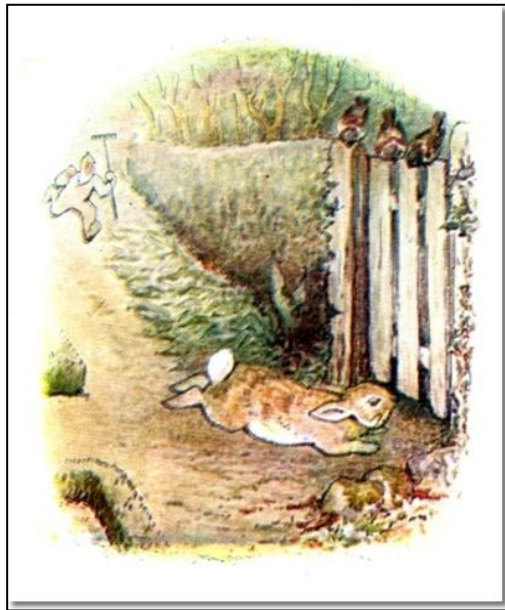
Figure 6.2: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix
Potter's *Peter Rabbit* (1902), p. 31

It is important, at this juncture, to consider how Potter's choice of animal characters – domesticated animals such as cats, dogs and pigs as well as non-domesticated ones, indigenous to Britain, such as foxes and mice – make this struggle more pronounced. In non-fictional life, Potter's animal protagonists exist in some form of subservient position in relation to humans: they are kept as companions, guards and hunters; they are exploited and hunted for meat, milk and eggs as well as fur and leather; they are exterminated as pests; they are abused for research and employed for entertainment. For instance, as Rose Lovell-Smith stresses, citing several historical sources, rabbits were considered either vermin or property of a landowner, and in both cases commonly hunted.[5] Potter's animal characters, whether domesticated or not, however, resist this exploitation and desire to escape their subservient position.

Literary critics such as Suzanne Rahn and Margaret Lane have frequently described Potter as hostile to social movements.[6] Her journal, which unfortunately ends in 1897, before the publication of even her first story, reveals that she undoubtedly had the urge to comment on human behaviour and social events. This journal, as well as letters Potter wrote, reveals that when she was young, she was influenced by her father's broadly conservative socio-political belief-system, and together they express anxiety about how socio-political changes might affect the comfortable life her parents had established though her father's successful law practice and stock-market investments. For instance, entries such as 'Father says he will be sorry if the Tories have to deal with this business [resistance by Scottish Liberals]' are common in her journal.[7] However, other, mostly later, entries reveal concern for the livelihood of farmers and labourers, livelihoods under challenge owing to falling wages and rising rents; and we can see support for socio-economic changes. By 1900, the free trade agreements of the 1870s were being challenged, since the decrease of exports *vis-à-vis* an increase of imports had caused economic losses. At the same time, the agricultural depression between 1870 and 1896 had led to a debate about a land reform that involved nationalisation and de-possession of landlords, but also triggered a movement of an urban population- and labour-increase, with farm workers moving to the city to find employment. At the same time, resistance to disenfranchisement became increasingly vehement. In 1890 for instance, when the British textile industry slashed wages following a tariff imposed by the United States on foreign cloth, strikes began in Bradford and spread to other towns;

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[5] Rose Lovell-Smith, 'Peter, Potter, Rabbits, Robbers', *Papers: Explorations into Children's Literature*, 19.1 (2009), pp. 17-29 (pp. 20, 22).
[6] Suzanne Rahn, 'The Tale of Two Bad Mice', *Children's Literature*, 12 (1984), pp. 78-91; Margaret Lane, *The Tale of Beatrix Potter: A Biography*, rev. edn. (London: Warne, 1971), pp. 103-06.
[7] Potter, '1886 London, Thursday, February 11th', in Linder, *Journal*, pp. 174-75 (p. 175).

in 1894, the Royal Observatory in Greenwich was targeted by the anarchist group Autonomie Club that participated in the anarchist campaign plotting actions against the aristocracy in European cities.[8]

Returning to Potter, it is true that there is little consistency in Potter's depiction of whether characters want to don or doff dress, or whether they are successful in their dress practices. This makes it hard to see her entire oeuvre as holding a consistent socio-political position expressed through her depiction of dress. Rather, it makes sense to approach each story as a specific response to social incidents. For instance, for Rahn, *The Tale of the Two Bad Mice* (1904) expresses Potter's condemnation of the 1885 riots that damaged shops and houses.[9] Or, as Lane claims, the same book exhibits Potter's condemnation of the Liberal policy of Free Trade in 1910 that deprived Potter of her American royalties.[10] Likewise, each story can be read as a response to personal circumstances, such as again *Two Bad Mice*, which is read by Daphne Kutzer as Potter's rationalisation of the need for personal domestic space in response to her parents' resistance to her relationship with Norman Warne.[11] Nonetheless, as already mentioned in the Introduction, we should consider that Potter's stories are not little self-contained tales set in a fantasy world. I want to argue that in this fictional universe, attire ties together the stories, imbuing them with certain underlying tensions. Attire, in fact, is intricately involved the characters' struggle for an independent identity, created by themselves and not imposed upon them. Potter has been said not to have cared for fine attire, and indeed, even as a young woman, she must have dressed very simply, given that she wondered whether she looked poor and 'was wanting new clothes' when she was told at a train station she did not need to pay to enter the lady's waiting room.[12] Yet, for all this apparent lack of interest in the subject, there are indications Potter was well aware that some clothes could have an empowering function. We can see such

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[8] Information in this paragraph is from: Robert Charles Kirkwood Ensor, *England, 1870–1914*, *The Oxford History of England*, 14 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), p. 117; Paul Readman, *Land and Nation in England: Patriotism, National Identity, and the Politics of Land, 1880–1914* (Woodbridge: The Royal Historical Society and the Boydell Press, 2008); Capie Forrest and Geoffrey Wood, 'Great Depression of 1873–1896', in David Glasner and Thomas F. Cooley, *Business Cycles and Depressions: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1997), pp.148–49; Ian Packer, 'The Liberals, The Land Question and Fiscal Policy', *Cercles* 21 (2011), pp. 11-26 (pp. 12-15); Barry Rubin and Judith Colp Rubin, *Chronologies of Modern Terrorism* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2008); *The Land Question in Britain, 1750-1950*, eds. Matthew Cragoe and Paul Readman (Houndsmill: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010).
[9] Rahn, 'The Tale of Two Bad Mice', pp. 78-91; Potter, *The Tale of Two Bad Mice* (1904; London: F. Warne & Co., 1993). Hereafter referred to in text, illustrations and footnotes as *Bad Mice*.
[10] Lane, *Beatrix Potter*, pp. 103-06.
[11] Daphne Kutzer, 'A Wilderness Inside: Domestic Space in the Work of Beatrix Potter', *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 21.2 (April 1997), pp. 204-17.
[12] Potter, '1896 London, Thursday, December 3rd', in Linder, *Journal*, p. 425.

awareness, for instance, when she confesses in her journal in 1896 that '[p]erhaps one has more assurance in Sunday clothes and a bonnet'.[13]

As mentioned in the Introduction, approaching images of natural and artificial dress, undressing, skinning and cross-dressing in Potter's stories through the prism of Michel Foucault's theory of the body as well as Anthony Giddens' analysis of self-identity helps tease out yet-unrecognised complexities and provide a more nuanced understanding. In Giddens' terms, at the time when the fabric of English society was being restructured and English society was exploring new images of self, dress images show that the animal characters are also depicted as having the opportunity to redefine who they are in a confusing universe. Family and customs are shown as lacking significance in the process of self-development, no longer providing clearly defined roles but instead implying an unsatisfactory and inferior existence. Certainly, the personal becomes political in this world, with some animal characters shown as possessing bodily awareness of who they are beyond some predetermined or essential self. True, they are not portrayed as engaging consciously in cognitive self-reflection of who they are or want to be. Yet, it is not only Peter's adventure that becomes, as Mullins argues, a journey of maturity and identity-formation. The analysis of the sartorial tug-of-war performed over time and place in and around the farms of Farmers McGregor, Potatoes and Piperson as well as the doll-houses and tailor-shops suggests that, regardless of the outcome of transgression, the animals' sartorial actions imply that the animal characters are portrayed as staging or trying to stage, their identity.

Thus, to return to my epigraph for this chapter, when Benjamin asks Peter who has his clothes, he is, in a Foucauldian sense, admitting to established mechanisms of control. The animals who refuse to have their body subjected to coercion must struggle to make lifestyle choices that involve donning artificial attire; in contrast, those animals that do not wear artificial attire or whose natural attire is in danger of being removed, express docility and acceptance of subjugation. My reading concentrates mostly on Potter's illustrations, given that the sartorial elements discussed are found more in the pictorial than the verbal text. Occasionally, we do see the two work together, but at other times, these two pull against each other – and in the arising tensions, we can, in fact, find the most interesting insights. By reading these animals' engagement with dress and their bodies as metaphorically expressing the animals' quest to assume ownership of self-identity, my study argues that Potter's stories inform contemporary

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[13] Potter, '1896 London, Sunday, May 17th', in Linder, *Journal*, pp. 412-13 (p. 412).

identity debates. After all, identity is presented as a performative act, characterised by ambivalence, fissures and tension, within shifting boundaries and cultural constructions

Identity in Potter's universe

Guard-animals and sartorial control

One very interesting and academically much-neglected group of animals in Potter's world is the cats and dogs living on the farms – for, if read within a Foucauldian framework, their sartorial depiction provides exciting insight into Potter's conflicting social attitudes. These animals, protecting the farmers' commercial interests, quite possibly represent domestic servants and farm-labourers whose obedience and work helped preserve the *status quo*. The gradual sartorial change in the representation of some of these animals potentially reflects Potter's gradual acknowledgement that these individuals also had the desire and right to assume ownership of their self-identity.

Undoubtedly, when reading sartorial images in the light of Potter's journal, it becomes difficult to ignore the existence of rather prejudiced social commentary and not consider that parallels exist between her stories and her opinions. There are, for instance, outbursts that occasionally ring out with disdain for the lower classes and fear of their uprising. In her very first entry, Potter fearfully, and with little recognition of concepts of equality, mentions the Luddites, an early-nineteenth century social movement in reaction to labour-saving textile, protesting against the increasing use of machinery in the textile industry. Potter writes that 'the mill people who were disturbed by the doctrines of a sect called Luddites, who thought everyone should be equal', first 'decided who should have this and that' of clothes hung out to dry and then sent her great-grandfather a death-threat, letting him know 'he was one of those to be killed.'[14] Even in 1895, Potter still feared this kind of encroachment, worrying that an 'individual, described as very dangerous and prepared to kill anybody, got into Miss Foster's garden, and being after dark could not be found, so a watch was set in the house'.[15] It is surely a response to these fears that in Potter's universe, we very often find the presence of guard-animals that protect their owners' commercial interests. Potter's depiction of these non-developed characters as also non-attired signals that their bodies have been

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[14] Potter, '1881 London', in Linder, *Journal*, pp. 1-7 (p. 2).
[15] Potter, '1895 Denbigh, Tuesday, May 28th', in Linder, *Journal*, pp. 376-79 (p. 377).

subjected to institutional regulation. My argument is that these guard animals potentially represent the servants who, as discussed in Chapter Four, derived self-respect from asserting superiority over other servants and being proud of their master's status, but also accepted submission to their master's authority.[16]

Take, for instance, the cat in Mr. McGregor's garden that becomes the obstacle in Benjamin's and Peter's quest to unlawfully appropriate the farmer's onions having retrieved Peter's clothes. This cat traps Benjamin and Peter for hours under a basket, until the appearance of Benjamin's father who chases the cat away. Identified as property through the red ribbon around its neck, this cat is certainly not drawn as sartorially writing its self-identity in any manner. Rather, it emerges as a creature that accepts, without a sense of self, its traditional identity of pet and vermin-hunter, without indicating any awareness of how mechanisms of control construct its existence (Figure 6.3).

Since the cat's portrayal as serenely basking in the sun suggests gratitude for the associated protection by the owner, these mechanisms are not constructed as necessarily oppressive – in fact, the cat is depicted in Foucault's terms as docile, disciplined into its imposed identity. Indeed, this cat is not shown to be interested in self-actualisation, which, as Giddens' contends, is only possible by confronting hazards to break through such oppressive mechanisms of regulation.

However, while in Potter's later stories lack of dress still characterises animal characters that do not struggle for identity ownership, the depiction of un-attired guard animals has changed: they are dogs and the service they provide resists easy interpretation. Obviously, dogs are common guard animals, but it makes one wonder whether any associations can be drawn to Potter's journal confession that 'I do not on the average care for dogs – especially other peoples. What can be the pleasure of owning fifty brutes, kept in a pen, fed upon porridge, and walked out by a drove with a long whip'.[17] Can parallels be drawn between her depiction of guard dogs and her conflicting belief system? Potter's journal, as early as 1884, betrays recognition that the *status quo* was not threatened by the disenfranchised, since 'if the labourers get power [through the 'extension of the Franchise'] they will be greedy at first, but I think the sentiments of the lower-classes in the country are rather conservative on the whole, very loyal and tenacious of England's honour'.[18]

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[16] Davidoff, *Worlds Between*, pp. 22-26.
[17] Potter, '1885 Birnam, Wednesday, August 31st', in Linder, *Journal*, pp. 253-54 (p. 254).
[18] Potter, '1884 London', in Linder, *Journal*, pp. 86-88 (p. 87).
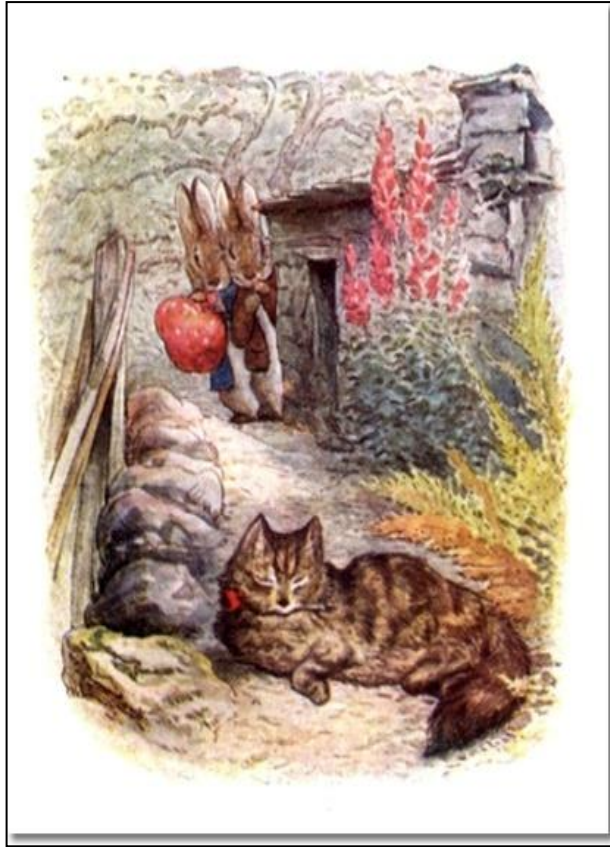
Figure 6.3: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Benjamin Bunny* (1904), p. 79

Dress images in the later stories indicate that Potter might potentially be commenting in a more supportive manner on contemporary constitutionalist and labour politics, such as the Employers and Workmen Act, which had been passed in 1875, and the Trades Disputes Act of 1906, both of which had led to more equality in the relationship between employer and employees.[19] In Potter's 1908 universe, land and property still need protection, but in *The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck* (1908), for instance, its protection appears a necessary evil, with offenders becoming victims and guards imbued with negative associations.[20] Jemima, the duck, runs away to avoid the farmer's confiscation of her eggs and is too naïve to realise the danger to her and her offspring's life when she is invited by a fox to hatch the eggs in a shed; ultimately, Jemima is saved by the farm dogs that, however, destroy some of her eggs and return her to the farm. A good example of how lack of attire suggests gradual discomfort with such structures of authority that require blind submission of the disenfranchised members is the illustration of the three puppy-dogs chasing the fox that wanted to kill Jemima (Figure 6.4). This illustration, in fact, reminds one of Victorian fox-hunt illustrations, so often found in English homes, such as *The Fox Chase, Plate IV: "A Southerly Wind and a Cloudy Sky"* by F. C. Tanner in 1834 (Figure 6.5).[21]

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[19] Richard Price, 'Britain', in *The Formation of Labour Movements 1870-1914: An International Perspective*, eds. Marcel van der Linden and Jürgen Rojahn (Leiden: Brill Academic Pub, 1990), pp. 2-24.

[20] Potter, *The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck* in *Tales from Beatrix Potter* (1908; London: F. Warne & Co., 1984), pp. 71-97. Hereafter referred to in text, illustrations and footnotes as *Jemima Puddle-Duck* & *Tales* respectively.

[21] 'The Fox Chase', by Henry Ranking Poore (1905). Florence Griswold Museum. *Fox-Chase Icons*, *On-Line Learning The Fox Chase*. <http://www.florencegriswoldmuseum.org/learning/foxchase/html/about_fox.php> [accessed 18.5.2013].
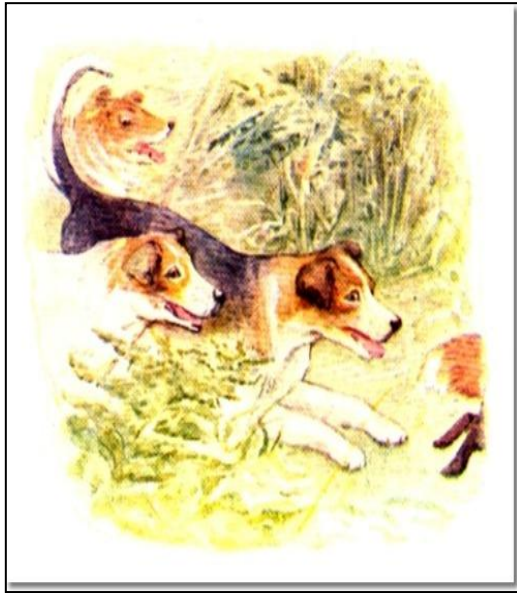
Figure 6.4: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Jemima Puddle-Duck* (1908), p. 94

Figure 6.5: *The Fox Chase, Plate IV: "A Southerly Wind and a Cloudy Sky" (1834). Engraving on paper,* by F. C. Tanner (painter) and Charles Hunt (engraver). Florence Griswold Museum.

Potter's dogs in the illustration appear to be the same breed and have similar colours as those in Tanner's illustration, as well as similar body posture while in pursuit of the fox. One may ask what could be so special about three non-anthropomorphised dogs chasing a fox, especially given that fox-hunting increased in popularity at the end of the nineteenth century, with larger farmers doing their best to maintain, or give the impression of being able to maintain, a grand lifestyle.[22] Potter's depiction of these dogs as disrespecting Jemima's reproductive rights and carrying out a form of infanticide, however, suggests a growing sense of discomfort with institutional measures of discipline that produce, in Foucault's terms, an efficient machine that may unthinkingly engage in atrocities. It is important, here, to keep in mind that hunting dogs, as with all animals in our universe, do not have an opportunity to be someone else; in Potter's universe, however, animals have the opportunity to choose who they want to be, albeit by risking their lives. The depiction of these un-attired dogs, thus, not only as accepting their position but taking their duties to the extreme – in fact, damaging the farmer's property by destroying the eggs – suggests critique of a *status quo*, even a dawning realisation that it might be becoming self-destructive.

One year later, in *The Tale of Ginger and Pickles* (1909), sartorial images express an even less equivocal engagement with the cost of maintaining social hierarchies.[23] This is a story about the dog Pickles and the cat Ginger, who are forced to foreclose their shop owing to debts; Pickles finds employment on a farm as a 'gamekeeper', while it is, according to the narrator, unknown 'what occupation' Ginger has.[24] Undoubtedly, pictorial dress images indicate a change of tone, with a dog now portrayed as a victim, punished for attempting transgression by having his clothes removed, and suggest sympathies for the plight of the disenfranchised.

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[22] Edward John T. Collins, 'Rural and Agricultural Change', in *The Agrarian History of England and Wales, 1850-1914 Part I*, eds. Joan Thirsk and E. J. T. Collins, vol. vii (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 72-223 (p. 145).
[23] Potter, *The Tale of Ginger and Pickles*, electronic edn. (Great Britain: Frederick Warne & Co., 1909). <http://catalog.lambertvillelibrary.org/texts/English/potter/ginger/ginger.htm> [accessed 2.3.2009]. Hereafter referred to in text, illustrations and footnotes as *Ginger and Pickles.*
[24] Potter, *Ginger and Pickles.*

While in *Jemima Puddle-Duck*, Kep and the other dogs were still only secondary characters whose lack of attire reflected lack of agency, Pickles is a central character. He is described as being subjected through material and sartorial dispossession to an enforced disavowal of the identity he constructed through his shop-owner-existence. When Pickles can no longer pay for his dog license because of the shop-foreclosure, sartorial images indicate that this license granted him the freedom that Kep lacks: personal and economic independence to actively write the narrative of his identity. Once the money is gone, Pickles is stripped of his anthropomorphising attire that expressed who he wanted to be. The accompanying illustration visualises how he is cornered into subjection. We see the now un-attired Pickles as almost caught between the farm house, a symbol of the structures that will govern his life, and two girls (Figure 6.6). This is quite a poignant image, given that children are supposed to have limited self-decisive power – for now these girls function as representatives of the human society that prevented his self-actualisation by removing his licence and reducing him to a servant position.

The girls' dresses emphasise the contrast with the naked and powerless Pickles. The depiction of the police officer doll and the teddy bear conveys the sense that these little girls have power over other bodies; that the fate of others is literally in their proverbial hands. However, while Pickles is reduced to not much more than a guard-dog existence, he is still constructed as a very different dog from Kep. For Pickles is pictorially depicted as wearing a jacket and carrying a weapon that could, in fact, be used against humans (Figure 6.7).

We need to realise the complexity contained in the representation of Pickles as a much more dangerous dog than Kep. The puppies killed Jemima's offspring and their owner's property in their impetuous obedience, but depicting Pickles with a weapon suggests a threat. However, Pickles is not depicted in a negative light, simply as a creature to be pitied for having been forced by human mechanisms of control to accept a life of servitude.

Figure 6.6: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Ginger and Pickles* (1909)
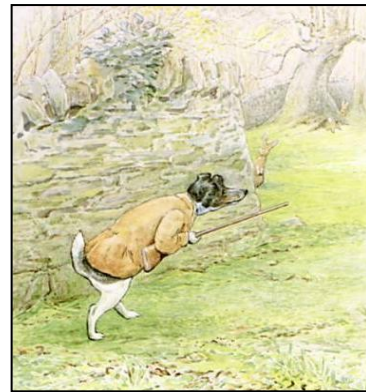
Figure 6.7: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Ginger and Pickles* (1909)

Figure 6.8: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Ginger and Pickles* (1909)

Furthermore, Ginger's construction is also highly interesting. Ginger is a very different cat from the nameless one in Farmer McGregor's garden. The verbal text tells us that he does not become a guard-animal but lives independently from humans in the 'warren', and though the narrator does not know 'what occupation he pursues, he still looks 'comfortable'.[25] The pictorial text certainly shows he retains his attire and uses man-made tools to hunt; the hunting (probably of rabbits, which we see depicted as hiding from him) is most probably for his own purposes (Figure 6.8). Furthermore, though he is in possession of items that could be used to injure humans or to poach much more successfully, we do not see Ginger depicted in any manner as a nuisance or threat. Ginger may live a marginalised existence, but if we look at Figure 6.8, we might say he has metaphorically simply turned his back to human mechanisms of control – and is busy constructing his own self-identity. As we can see, dress images indeed alert to at least the possibility that Potter's stories gradually recognise the disenfranchised.

Sartorial suffrage and the narration of the self

Certainly, careful exploration of sartorial images alert us to Potter's conflicting, at times quite confusing, and gradually changing, position on social changes. In 1885, Potter seems to have shared the magistrate's opinion that 'if many of the unemployed were out of work' because they 'had left a situation to better' themselves, then 'they deserved very little sympathy'.[26] So, when Peter is portrayed pictorially as literally hanging upside down after having invaded the farmer's land, can one draw a parallel to Potter's outburst in 1886 that '[l]and is as much personal property as plate or carriages' and that those who participated in riots 'ought to be hung at once like dogs […] They, if unchecked, will cause wholesale slaughter and ruin society' (Figure 6.9).[27]

Possibly, Potter used the figure of Peter to suggest ways of dealing with potential threats. After all, and paradoxically, given her love for her pet rabbits, in 1892, she confessed in her journal that she considered rabbits 'shallow' and that her pet rabbit, Benjamin, was characterised by 'vulgarity' and 'silliness'.[28] The ending of *Peter Rabbit*

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[25] Potter, *Ginger and Pickles*.
[26] Potter, '1885 London, Monday, February 16th', in Linder, *Journal*, p. 125.
[27] Potter, '1886 London, Friday, February 12th', in Linder, *Journal*, pp. 175-76 (p. 176). 'They' refers to Henry Hyndman, John Burns, Henry Hyde Champion and J. Williams, indicted in 1886 for conspiracy in relation to the Trafalgar Square riots of the February 1886, where protesters rallied against economic hardships, engaging in window smashing and looting.
[28] Potter, '1892 Birnam, Saturday, October 29th', in Linder, *Journal*, pp. 297-300 (p. 300).

certainly visualises how a threat can be 'checked'. In Figure 6.9, we see him entangled in the net; the position of his body, the exposed belly, and the single tear right above his nose, all create a touching image, but also poignantly visualise defeat, his enforced submission to institutional mechanisms of control.

However, if we examine her journal, we will see that over the years, Potter's standpoint changed. Possibly, her much-admired cousin Caroline Hutton, née Clark, instilled social conscience; we can see this when Potter recalls Hutton who 'talked of labourers, their miserable wages […] their unsanitary cottages, their appalling families and improvidence'.[29] Possibly, Potter was also affected by her grandfather, who had been elected Liberal MP for Carlisle and had been quite a progressive employer, providing his child workers with a school and a library as well as all his workers with fresh food.[30] Certainly, the land question that was 'central to Edwardian politics' was also important to Potter.[31] She later exchanged 'the privilege of basking among the aristocracy' for investing her money to buy and preserve the changing English landscape, starting with Hill Top Farm in Near Sawrey in 1905 as well as becoming farmer and sheep-breeder.[32]

To understand the complexities of and contradictions in Potter's stories, expressed through dress images, we might return to *Benjamin Bunny*. The two cousins are portrayed in a likable manner as victimised creatures, but also as timidly engaging in a sartorial self-narration that reveals self-awareness and a nascent resistance to external control-mechanisms. Peter is no longer the impudent little rabbit-child or annoying intruder, but someone in emotional distress owing to sartorial dispossession. He looks 'poorly […] dressed in a red cotton pocket-handkerchief'.[33] The accompanying illustration that depicts him at the mercy of an unidentified farmer whose boots linger threateningly above his head enhances the sentiment, establishing Peter as victim despite the fact he is trespassing (Figure 6.10).

Peter's sartorial dispossession has stripped him of his feisty character and enveloped him in what might be called an existential angst that has arrested self-development. Potter's pictorial depiction of his clothes on a scarecrow certainly brings to mind images of a crucifixion and suggests that in the Foucauldian sense, bodily

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[29] Potter, '1894 Stroud', in Linder, *Journal*, pp. 312-20 (p. 316).
[30] Judy Taylor, 'The Story of Beatrix Potter', in *Beatrix Potter 1866–1943: The Artist and Her World*, eds. Judy Taylor, Joyce Irene Whalley, Anne Stevenson Hobbs, and Elizabeth M. Battrick (1987; London: F. Warne & Co. and The National Trust, 1995), pp. 9-34 (pp. 9-10).
[31] Packer, 'The Liberals, The Land Question and Fiscal Policy', p. 11.
[32] Potter, '1895 London, A Private View at the Academy', in Linder, *Journal*, p. 365.
[33] Potter, *Benjamin Bunny*, p. 66.

control is maintained by those in power through threats of punishment. However, unlike Ginger, Peter refuses to be controlled and accept a predetermined identity; instead, with Benjamin's encouragement and help, he rejects control by repossessing his attire and returns to writing who he wants to be into existence. To complicate matters a little further, let us also consider her so-called miniature letters, written probably between 1907 and 1912. These letters are invented correspondence between her characters and Potter sent these letters – with an address and a stamp drawn on it – to various children she knew. If we read Peter's correspondence, we see that Potter portrays Peter's writing as significantly more sophisticated than that of Farmer McGregor's wife.[34] Furthermore, in the miniature letters exchanged between his mother and the washerwoman Mrs. Tiggy-winkle, Peter does not appear as the son of a working-class female: his mother's condescending tone, as well as Mrs. Tiggy-winkle's subservient tone, with less sophisticated grammar and syntax skills, suggest that Peter is safely ensconced in what can be termed a middle-class existence.[35]

Given that, in *The Tale of the Flopsy Bunnies* (1909), he has achieved an independent socio-economic identity by possessing his own nursery garden, it becomes clear his life is no longer a series of random events, but a coherent and continuous story of his self.[36] Possibly, Peter was Potter's ideal candidate for expressing sympathies with social changes, considering her meta-reflective commentary on Peter's origins, expressed in a letter in 1940 to Mrs. Miller, that Peter 'and his little friends keep on their way […] They were always independent'.[37] These little bunnies were, in Potter's mind, imaginary characters that 'just "grow'd"' into existence – and it seems they also grew into writing their sartorial reality.[38] This description of the origins of Peter and his friends certainly differs significantly from her assessment of her pets as shallow or vulgar mentioned previously and indicates that, at least over time, Potter perceived her fictional bunnies in a different light than her real ones.[39]

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[34] Leslie Linder, *History of the Writings of Beatrix Potter* (London: Frederick Warne & Co., 1971), pp. 72-73. Henceforward referred to as Linder, *History*.
[35] Linder, *History*, p. 78.
[36] Potter, *The Tale of the Flopsy Bunnies*, in *Tales* (1909), pp. 99-125. Hereafter referred to in text, illustrations and footnotes as *Flopsy Bunnies.*
[37] Linder, *History*, p. 92.
[38] Linder, *History*, p. 92.
[39] Linder, *History*, p. 148.

Figure 6.9: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Peter Rabbit* (1902), p. 21
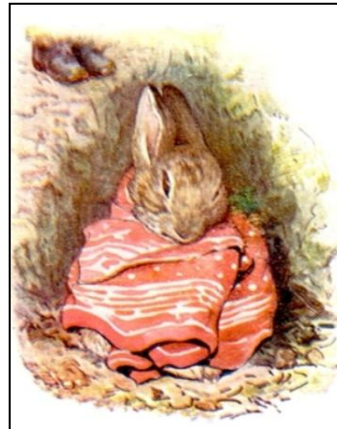
Figure 6.10: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Benjamin Bunny* (1904), p. 66

Indeed, the fact that in an increasing number of stories animals are shown as successfully engaging in sartorial self-actualisation suggests an increasing rejection of landlordism as evil and a more thoughtful aspect to the girl who, in 1885, had so callously admitted in her journal that some boys who drowned 'belonged to the lowest set in the town, and will not be missed'.[40] In *The Tale of Pigling Bland* (1913), a further change in attitude emerges, with sartorial images now almost confirming the possibility of socio-economic suffrage. First, the enforced protection of existing structures of authority through control of the body is associated with poignant sacrifice.[41] The narration of Aunt Pettitoes' piglets being taken from her and sold for slaughter or labour evokes images of slavery, or at least feudal times, when identity was generally socially-imposed and hugely difficult to rewrite, especially for those not belonging to the upper classes. Second, one of Aunt Pettitoes' children, Pigling Bland, maintains ownership of his body since, unlike his predecessors in this fictional universe, he is never depicted as sartorially dispossessed of his self-identity. True, until he leaves the farm, Pigling is not depicted as displaying any interest in who he is or wants to be, sartorially or otherwise. Yet, once he is obliged to abandon his familiar surroundings that also confer his predetermined identity, this changes. Pigling's desire to be a farmer who grows potatoes might well be considered as echoing Joseph Chamberlain's efforts in 1885 to provide allotments for farm labourers of '3 acres and a cow' by transferring ownership from landlords.[42] In the story, this change begins with the figure of the narrator, who is supposedly Potter herself, pinning the licence permits on either Pigling or his brother Alexander (Figure 6.11).[43]

It makes one wonder whether it is more than coincidence than Potter inserts herself into Figure 6.11, which visualises the beginning of Pigling's emancipation and acquisition of an independent and reflective self-identity at a time she was emancipating herself. The story had its origins in 1910, and Potter herself wrote to Millie Warne about young pigs being sold from Hill Top Farm; however, the year the story was published was also the year Potter got married and moved to Castle Cottage in Near Sawrey with her husband.[44] The depiction of the narrator bending down to the piglet certainly brings to mind a maternal gesture, not a repressive one. Interestingly, Potter verbally describes Pigling as carefully concealing these papers 'inside his clothes', and then as cunningly

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[40] Potter, '1885 Keswick, Sunday, August 16th', in Linder, *Journal*, pp. 148-49 (p. 148).
[41] Potter, *The Tale of Pigling Bland* in *Further Tales* (1913), pp. 89-128. Hereafter referred to in text, illustrations and footnotes as *Pigling Bland*.
[42] Packer, 'The Liberals, The Land Question and Fiscal Policy', pp. 12-13.
[43] Linder, *History*, p. 213.
[44] Linder, *History*, pp. 213-17.

employing his and his brother's papers to save himself and the girl-pig Pig-wig (who he has already saved from being slaughtered by Farmer Piperson) from being arrested and turned into a farm-labourer. Pigling's action indicates self-reflective and deliberate consideration of potential options – and an active choice of destiny.[45] The last illustration certainly visualises that these animal characters gleefully accept the choices they have achieved to acquire (Figure 6.12).

We see the two dressed and dancing, almost as if performing, in front of the reader; these are certainly not the little pigs treated as livestock by either the narrator or Mr. Piperson. The depiction of three non-anthropomorphised rabbits, drawn so much smaller, enhances the pigs' anthropomorphisation. One of these rabbits is supposed to be Peter, but looking at the illustration, all one sees is three rabbits relegated to the natural realm.[46] It is difficult to tell why Potter might add a non-attired Peter to this story, having described him to her readers through so many stories as taking possession of his dress and life. Certainly, though, these rabbits express a chasm, suggesting the pig-couple has severed its ties to its previous, controlled, existence. The sunset in the background further augments the sense of endings and new beginning – possibly an ending to the chapter of their life that involved bodily control and imposition of identity, and the promise of a new life. The crossroad sign, connoting choices of directions, suggests that the pair now has the choice of taking its life into the direction it desires. This sense of freedom is verbally enhanced through Pig-wig's description as running over the bridge while her 'petticoats fluttered', possibly 'cross[ing] the county boundary'.[47] These fluttering petticoats express motion and energy, a *joie-de-vivre* and a sense of liberation that did not exist in Potter's previous stories; while the crossed boundaries suggest condoning of transgression.

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[45] Potter, *Pigling Bland*, p. 106.
[46] Potter wrote in a miniature letter from Peter Rabbit to Master Dew Fayle in 1910 that she planned to include Peter in a 'picture at the end of the pigbook'. In Linder, *History*, p. 213.
[47] Potter, *Pigling Bland*, p. 128.

Figure 6.11: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Pigling Bland* (1913), p. 96.

Figure 6.12: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Pigling Bland* (1913), p. 128

Gender identity

The female sex

As we just saw, dress images confirm that as Potter literally rewrote her own socio-economic identity through stories that granted her financial independence, increasingly she constructed fictional characters that engage in the process of self-actualisation. Surprisingly, then, Potter denies many of her female characters the possibility of self-actualisation that she grants Peter and Pigling. I say surprisingly given that her parents denied her both the traditional gender model of getting married and having children as well as the alternative of working for a living. As Daphne Kutzer puts it, Potter's parents 'seem to have felt that their daughter's sole duty in life was to take care of them.[48] Indeed, Potter's pictorial depiction of her female characters suggests that parental influence was so strong it tainted Potter's gender perceptions. Regardless of whether the character lives in a house as with Mrs. Twitchit in *The Tale of Samuel Whiskers* (1908), a burrow as with Mrs. Rabbit in *Peter Rabbit* or a tree as with Mrs. Tiptoes in *The Tale of Timmy Tiptoes* (1911), there is incredible similarity in dress (Figures 6.13-6.15).[49] And this dress conveys a strict sense of Victorian propriety and domesticity, transforming the female animal body into an hour-glass shaped, feminised human body.

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[48] Kutzer, *Beatrix Potter*, p. 7.
[49] Potter, *The Tale of Samuel Whiskers or The Roly-Poly Pudding*, in *More Tales from Beatrix Potter* (1908; Middlesex: W. H. Smith, 1985), pp. 67-112. Hereafter referred to in text, illustrations and footnotes as Samuel Whiskers & More Tales respectively; *The Tale of Timmy Tiptoes*, in *Selected Tales* (1911), pp. 37-63. Hereafter referred to in text, illustrations and footnotes as *Timmy Tiptoes*.

Figure 6.13: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Samuel Whiskers* (1908), p. 69

Figure 6.14: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Peter Rabbit* (1902), p. 33

Figure 6.15: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Timmy Tiptoes* (1911), p. 56

One might even think that in Potter's stories, the 'one size fits all' expression translates into 'one appearance suits all' – and thus implies 'one identity fits all'. However, such a translation ignores the complex meanings created through Potter's use of dress in her stories. First, we need to contextualise. Potter's stories were written at a time where real girls, as Sally Mitchell puts it, also had increasing opportunities for self-actualisation, in contrast to the previous generation.[50] In Potter's fictional world, female characters are sometimes given the option that women had in the real world, and that Potter as a young woman longed for in 1884, when she confessed to herself '[o] dear, if I was a boy and had courage!'[51] However, in this fictional world, the possibility of self-actualisation is reserved for those females capable of behaving thoughtfully and decisively, and denied to those who cannot. In the following section, we will see that as Potter rewrote (or, in Butler's terms, rescripted) her own gender identity, she created more dynamic characters capable of taking an active but also responsible role in the construction of a self-identity beyond established expectations.

Dress and the naïve female

Let us first examine how the sartorial depiction of female characters who engage in immature, or at least naïve, behaviours alerts us to a derogatory attitude towards members of the female sex that lack the ability to thoughtfully imagine who they want to be and to meaningfully write their narrative. Potter's journal undoubtedly betrays humorous disdain of shallow women, such as Mrs. Culbard, who is described as 'perfectly incoherent in her conversation […] her anecdotes have neither head or tail', or Mrs. McInroy of Lude, the wife of an insolvent husband, whose 'demeanour […] resembles a startled hen'.[52] One such shallow animal character is the cat Ribby, or more correctly Mrs. Ribstone Pippin, who in *The Tale of the Pie and the Patty-Pan* (1911) is depicted as harbouring a naïve desire to explore an alternative lifestyle and thus its associated identity by inviting Duchess, the dog, to her house.[53] The visit turns into a disaster, because Duchess, not trusting Ribby's cooking, invades Ribby's house to secretely replace the pie Ribby has prepared with a pie of her own; Ribby, unwittingly,

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[50] Mitchell, *New Girl*, pp. 172-175.
[51] Potter, '1884, Friday, November 28th', in Linder, *Journal*, p. 116-118 (p. 117).
[52] Potter, '1892 Birnam, Friday August 5th' & '1892 Birnam, Thursday, August 25th', in, Linder, *Journal*, pp. 244-45 (p. 244), 252.
[53] Potter, *The Tale of the Pie and the Patty-Pan*, in *Selected Tales* (1911), pp. 65-97. Hereafter referred to in text, illustrations and footnotes as *Patty-Pan*. Ribby's full name found in Linder, *History*, p. 168.

serves her own pie, but Duchess, believing she has swallowed her own patty pan, behaves hysterically.Within Giddens' framework of identity-construction, Ribby exists in a modern society where she has the relative freedom of choosing how to position herself in relation to others. Dressed in this story in a similar fashion to Mrs. Rabbit and Mrs. Twitchit, Ribby seems to exist, as do they, within feminised domestic space. However, her desire to socialise with Duchess, an un-attired dog, suggests that Ribby desires a more emancipated, alternative lifestyle. It is interesting to note that Duchess is one of the few characters in Potter's stories whose lack of artificial dress appears not to be associated with lack of ownership of body and self. Duchess not only owns '*her* house, at the other end of the village' where Ginger and Pickles temporarily run their shop, but the portrayal of her as proudly stroking her natural coat suggests that, unlike Kep and Pickles, she enjoys this lack of dress – and that it is this naturalness that characterises the narrative of herself (Figure 6.16).[54]

We need to consider, however, that Duchess is not a likable character. Her naturalness of appearance certainly brings to mind the dress reforms of the late nineteenth century (discussed in Chapter Two), which decried contemporary women's fashion with its bustles and corsets as excessive, restrictive, unhealthy and unnatural. Duchess' might, on the one hand, be read as an expression of support for contemporary dress reforms, given Potter's own resistance to restrictive attire with 'padding or whalebone' and that Duchess was based on a valuable Pomeranian that Potter admired for its 'character and intelligence'.[55]

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[54] Potter, *Patty-Pan*, p. 78. Italics in the original.
[55] Potter, '1890 London Tuesday, February 4th', in, Linder, *Journal*, pp. 202-03 (p. 203); Linder, *History*, p. 169.

Figure 6.16: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Patty-Pan*
(1911), p. 78

On the other hand, given that Duchess is a devious character and that her legs are clearly visible, Potter might be distancing herself from contemporary emancipatory movements expressed through trousers. It is ceretainly quite perplexing that Potter supported knickerbockers, which had become associated, as we saw in Chapter Two, more with leisure activities than gender issues – while at the same time expressing disdain for bloomers that, as we also saw, were associated with the women's movement. For instance, in 1894, Potter confided to her journal that 'we are at the edge of the reign of knickerbockers' owing to the acceptability of such attire, since it permitted engaging in 'masculine amusement'; her journal betrays support for this 'costume' when worn to engage in 'gymnastics' or some other 'definite reason'.[56] Conversely, we witness condemnation of bloomers when she refers to 'the bloomer mania' which championed 'divided skirts' and appears critical of the fact that they were worn 'universally, and on all occasions'.[57] Certainly, when Duchess is described in a minitature letter as declining another of Ribby's invitation because she is parading her natural attire at a 'dog show', we get a sense that Duchess is associated with the flimsy world of appearances; the fact that she 'did not take a prize' further suggests a refusal on Potter's side to allow this character a successful self-narration.[58] Maybe this fictional and un-attired dog functions as a character that allowed Potter to negotiate her own emancipatory thoughts, containing both the promise and the threat of a liberated existence.

In any case, Duchess' sartorial function in relation to Ribby in *Patty-Pan* is exciting. Duchess, a deceitful and hysterical creature that has not learned to speak the socially-acceptable language of sartorial codes, exposes Ribby as amazingly naïve. First, she invades Ribby's house and tries on her clothes, making Ribby doubt her senses and wonder that 'I did not *think* I left that drawer pulled out; has somebody been trying on my mittens?'[59] Second, when Duchess becomes hysterical, Ribby offers her 'nice warm shawl' and thereby betrays her inability to truly perceive and understand that Duchess follows a very different lifestyle.[60] Since Ribby is shown as ultimately regressing to her previous existence, ignorant of what truly happened, it becomes clear that she failed to take ownership of her story. And this failure continues when Ribby continues to hope (in vain) to change her lifestyle through association with Duchess, who cannot accept Ribby's invitation because of the 'dog show'.[61] Ribby's desire to

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[56] Potter, '1894 Lennel, Wednesday August 1st', in Linder, *Journal*, p. 324.
[57] Potter, '1894 Lennel, Wednesday August 1st', in Linder, *Journal*, p. 324.
[58] Linder, *History*, p. 82.
[59] Potter, *Patty-Pan*, p. 78. Italics in the original.
[60] Potter, *Patty-Pan*, p. 95.
[61] Linder, *History*, p. 82.

rewrite who she is is exposed as a series of disconnected and incomplete events, failing to form a meaningful, continuous narrative. Ribby is exposed as a willingly blind and naïve character , incapable of leading a coherent lifestyle that reflects self-identity.

Then there is also Jemima, another naïve female character shown as desiring to create her own story but tragically failing. In *Tom Kitten*, Jemima unsuccessfully attempts, together with two other ducks, Mr. Drake and Rebeccah Puddle-Duck, to acquire a visible gender identity by appropriating Benjamin's and his sister's clothes. Jemima might appear to assume a supposedly feminine identity by donning the female kittens' pinafores, but clothes express the difference between truly investing efforts in self-actualisation and haphazardly deciding who to be. Jemima's supposed gender acquisition, visualised through the attire she dons, is not the product of agency, but simply a matter of coming across attire discarded by someone else. Second, we need to consider that this donning of dress was not meant to anthropomorphise Jemima further or suggest self-actualisation, but simply a narrative decision on Potter's part to imbue the story with more suspense. For while working on *Tom Kitten*, Potter insisted in a letter that 'it would give the story a new and criminal aspect if he [Mr. Drake] forcibly took off and *stole* Tom's trousers'.[62] One illustration visualises that dress does not transform Jemima's body into an anthropomorphised being with a visible feminine gender identity (Figure 6.17). The story in fact deals in quite an unforgiving manner with Jemima's half-hearted enfranchisement efforts, forcing her back into her socially-imposed existence where she lacks the right to differentiate herself from others and develop a personalised identity. When the ducks go to their natural habitat, a pond, with their donned identity, the stolen attire 'came off directly, because there were no buttons'.[63] This lack of buttons suggests that the lifestyle chosen is not a reflection of her self-identity – since Jemima would be able to maintain this assumed self-identity, if at all, only through artificial means.

Interestingly, when Potter returns to this character one year later in *Jemima Puddle-Duck*, she depicts the same fowl as again trying to acquire a feminine gender identity by donning bonnet and cape. However, this is no longer a story about spontaneous bullying (conceived of by a third party) to enjoy a short-lived game, but a struggle for reproductive liberty; thus, it can be said that in this story, Jemima does engage in a self-reflective attempt to write her life-story. Yet, once again, Jemima fails. Her escort back to the farm by the canine servants, with Jemima in the middle, brings to

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[62] Linder, *History*, p. 187. Italics in the original.
[63] Potter, *Tom Kitten,* p. 30.

mind prisoners or slaves in shackles, and thus renders her independence-effort a defeat (Figure 6.18).

When pictorially stripped of her costume, it becomes clear that, for Jemima, there is no hope of suffrage. As Ribby, Jemima cannot claim ownership of who she wants to be exactly because of who she is: superficial and ignorant. For instance, her depiction of being fooled by fancy attire into not seeing what the reader sees and what her senses should tell her suggests almost wilful blindness: even if the fox is upright and clothes disguise his body, his face is obviously that of a fox, not a person (Figure 6.19). And this blindness is what ultimately disrupts her identity project: not seeing that the individual with the 'long bushy tail' she allows to walk in such close physical proximity is a fox intent on appropriating her body and not a 'civil and handsome' gentleman.[64] Though the story is certainly heart-rending, with Jemima's unborn children being murdered, it also clearly suggests that Jemima is too naïve to achieve self-actualisation.

So, what do these two characters tell us about Potter's attitudes towards the changing landscape of women's rights? Yes, self-actualisation is denied to Jemima, just as to Ribby – but it becomes clear that both characters lack the ability to make careful decisions and recognise deceptions. Indeed, these two characters are exposed as incapable of looking beyond appearances and of thoughtfully constructing the identity they supposedly desire. This does not mean, however, that dress images expose a rejection of the possibility for female self-actualisation or that they suggest Potter's stories do not disrupt contemporary gender discourses. Rather, we see the perception that the rejection of a socially-imposed gender identity that involves, to use Giddens' terms, exploitation, inequality and oppression is reserved for only a few females who, to use Butler's terms, are capable of employing agency to resist the cultural inscriptions of their body.[65]

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[64] Potter, *Jemima Puddle-Duck*, p. 80.
[65] Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, pp. 210-14.
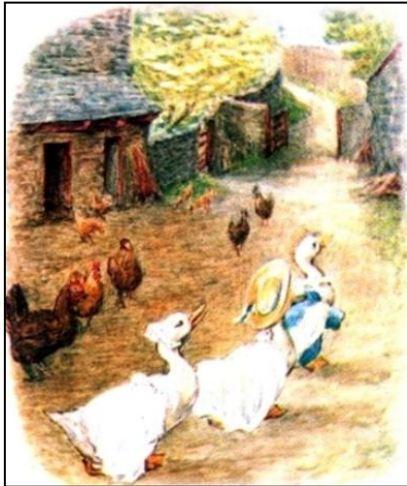
Figure 6.17: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Tom Kitten* (1907), p. 24
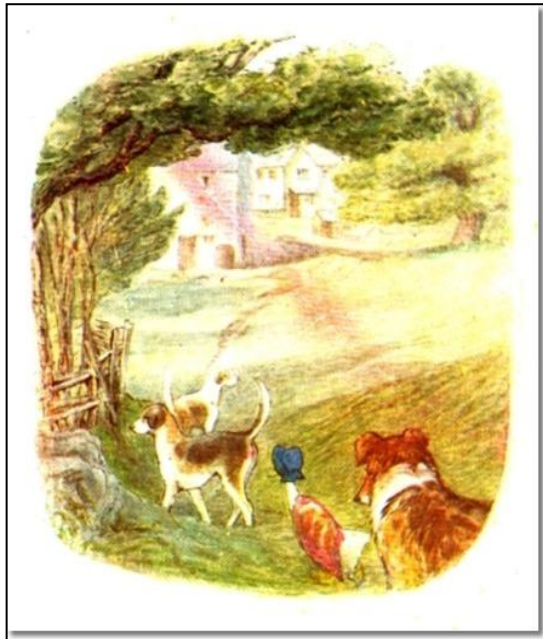
Figure 6.18: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Jemima* (1908), p. 96.
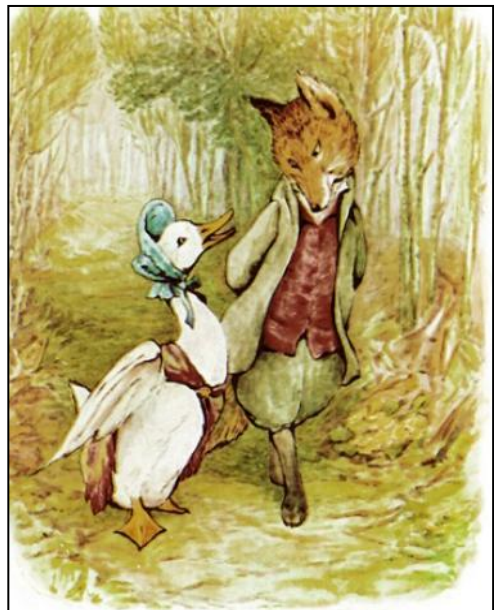
Figure 6.19: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Jemima* (1908), *frontispiece*

Bold sartorial moves and the thoughtful female

In fact, in this universe, there are many other female characters who, unlike Ribby and Jemima, are depicted as sartorially establishing a more emancipated feminine identity, beyond traditional structures. An examination of three such characters provides insight into how dress images add complex commentary to these stories. As we will see, while Potter's stories are riddled with tensions, descriptions of sartorial self-actualisation signal the hope that a personalised gender identity can be written and rewritten if the female individual displays reflectivity. Potter's diary indeed reveals admiration for thoughtful and strong women. For instance, she described her beloved cousin Caroline as possessing common sense and her aunt Sidney as having 'strong sensibility and powers of observation' and 'knowledge of character, and great wisdom, and memory', as well as having learned to 'calmly and peacefully' confront life owing to 'trouble and experience'.[66] Potter herself might have lived a protected life, but the efficient handling of her business dealings with the firm Ernest Nister demonstrates her resolve. In 1892, Potter had sold this firm a few drawings, but when this firm offered her disadvantageous terms for turning her story of Jeremy Fisher into a booklet in 1894, she successfully negotiated the price she wanted despite the firm's condescending tone.[67] And in 1902, she herself managed to buy back the copyrights for the story, for the firm 'professed to have destroyed them [drawings and blocks] until I bid them up to £6, when they were promptly "found"'.[68] This of course does not mean that Potter was untouched by the still-limited recognition of women in society and the opposition to female public involvement. For instance, she did not sign her name on the posters she prepared, in light of upcoming elections, in protest against the Free Trade agreement which she considered to be harming her country and people, since '[i]t must not be let out that the […] leaflet is written by a *female*'.[69] And while not all her empowered female characters are pleasing or admirable or sophisticated, it is exciting to realise how dress increasingly grants them a more liberated gender identity that refuses to comply with feminised stereotypes of behaviours such as deference or meekness.

At the time when her relationship with Norman Warne was beginning to blossom, much to her parents' displeasure, Potter wrote *Bad Mice*, a story about the fierce struggle of a mouse couple, and particularly of the female mouse Hunca Munca,

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[66] Potter, '1886 Manchester, Tuesday, February 23rd', in Linder, *Journal*, pp. 177-80 (p. 179).
[67] Linder, *History*, pp. 175-77.
[68] Linder, *History*, p. 178.
[69] Communication with Mr. Evans of printing firm Edmund Evans Ltd, of Swan Street. London, S.E., 1910, in Linder, *History*, p. 399. Italics in the original.

to create its own space by invading a dollhouse. What makes this story particularly special is that in fact, Potter's relationship with Warne evolved through the story and the letters she exchanged with Warne. He assisted her by providing photographs of the dollhouse he was making for his niece, Winifred Warne, as well with dolls that served as models for doll-characters Lucinda and the cook.[70] Potter's letters to Warne indicate growing emotional attachment, but also mounting frustration with her parents, as when she confesses she could not accept his invitation to draw the dollhouse based on the original at his niece's home, because her mother objected and was 'so exacting'.[71] Certainly, Hunca Munca is a character that brings to mind contemporary discussions of the suffrage movement – and also suggests a more personal investment in the story. She is portrayed as taking an active role in the creation and maintenance of this space – for while her husband Tom Thumb simply demolishes things, she steals clothes and household items; then, after they are discovered, Tom Thumb tries to atone with a 'crooked sixpence', while she offers to sweep the dollhouse daily.[72] It is true, Hunca Munca's pictorial depiction occasionally suggests that Potter might have shared contemporary beliefs – or, at least, wondered whether they were true – that suffrage implied the overturning of sex roles and the perversion of natural order, with mothers abandoning domestic space and thus betraying their natural functions.[73] Certainly, when Potter criticised Caroline Hutton (who expressed reluctance to marry and a 'pronounced dislike of babies and all child cousins'), admitting that 'I hold an old-fashioned notion that a happy marriage is the crown of a woman's life', it is hard to imagine that Potter supported a woman's choice not to wed.[74] Maybe the figure of Hunca Munca can better be understood if placed within contemporary discourse on the so-called New Woman mentioned in the previous chapters. As Lyn Pykett stresses, there was more than one version of the discursive figure of the New Woman; for liberal reforming feminists, she served in the discussion of women's rights to choose who to be, while social-purity feminists employed her to stress the superiority of feminised values that needed to be adopted in the public realm.[75] Potter was neither an activist nor New Woman author, but sartorial images indicate that Hunca Munca is a figure that engages with a woman's right to choose who she wants to be, albeit in the spirit of the social-purity feminists and

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[70] Kutzer, *Beatrix Potter,* p. 66; Linder, *History*, pp. 150-51.
[71] Kutzer, *Beatrix Potter,* p. 66; Linder, *History*, pp. 150-51 (p. 151).
[72] Potter, *Two Bad Mice*, p. 56.
[73] Les Garner, *Stepping Stones to Women's Liberty: Feminist Ideas in the Women's Suffrage Movement 1900-1918* (New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 1984), p. 10.
[74] Potter, '1894 Stroud', in Linder, *Journal*, pp. 312-20 (pp. 313-14).
[75] Pykett, *Engendering Fictions: The English Novel in the Early Twentieth Century*, pp. 38-39.

their support of maternal values.[76] Once the mouse-couple invades the dollhouse, Hunca Munca appropriates the dolls' dresses and thus begins rewriting her own disenfranchised self. By donning a dress that follows Aesthetic or Princess fashion, Hunca Munca also rejects the corseted fashion of Victorian times, as well as the associated restrictive lifestyle (Figure 6.20).

However, we need to consider that while Potter desired sartorial freedom that reflected the ability to move, she criticised 'skirts [that] are too skimpy', and certainly condemned British cartoonist George du Maurier's preference for the 'dowdy Princess robe'.[77] Such a fashion attitude does suggest that Hunca Munca's donning of what appears to be Aesthetic dress might point to a more complex meaning. It is interesting that a comparison of Figure 6.20 and Figure 6.21 show that once Hunca Munca dons the dress, it loses its looseness and transforms her into a female figure who does not differ significantly from Mrs. Rabbit, Mrs. Tiptoes or Mrs. Twitchit. But why not complicate Hunca Munca's character further by considering how she openly shows the police officer – and thus the readers – her disregard of the law by parading in front of him in the stolen dress? In this scene, it becomes hard not to think of her as a representative of the first suffragettes, the members of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) founded in 1903 – who, according to Pykett, were social-purity feminists championing the slogan 'Votes for Women and Purity for Men'.[78] The WSPU members perceived themselves as tender and sympathetic even if, led by Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst, they engaged in often militant actions in their struggle for acquiring the vote for women.[79] In any case, when *Bad Mice* was published, the WSPU was still non-militant in its call for the vote; plus, there were also other groups calling for suffrage, such as the less confrontational National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), formed in 1887 and led by Millicent Fawcett. Potter may not have belonged to any such group, but her resentment against disenfranchisement of women becomes clear when, in 1910, protesting against land tax clauses, she exclaimed '[a]lso I have no vote!'[80]

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[76] Kortsch, *Dress Culture*, p. 15.
[77] Potter, '1890 London Tuesday, February 4th', in Linder, *Journal*, pp. 202-03 (p. 203).
[78] Pykett, *Engendering Fictions*, p. 39.
[79] *Literature of the Women's Suffrage Campaign in England*, ed. Carolyn Christensen Nelson (Ontario, Canada: Broadview Press, 2004); Angela K. Smith, *Suffrage Discourse in Britain during the First World War* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); Cohler, *Citizen, Invert, Queer: Lesbianism and War in Early Twentieth-Century Britain*; Garner, *Stepping Stones to Women's Liberty.*
[80] Potter, printed by Martin, Hood & Larkin, in Linder, *History*, p. 403.

Figure 6.20: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Bad Mice* (1904), p. 11

Figure 6.21: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Bad Mice* (1904), p. 52

Thus, while Potter preferred 'words' instead of the 'deeds' that Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst called for, Hunca Munca obviously resorts to the latter.[81] Despite an apparent penitence, Hunca Munca is not a docile and maternal female, but rather a pushy one, not afraid to invert traditional roles in her struggle to write herself into existence. The doll figure depicted as looking through the window of the first floor, with a look of horror as Hunca Munca holds up her infant to the police officer and, wearing her newly-donned identity, poignantly expresses her resistance. The classic figure of male authority has lost authority, helplessly raising his arms but unable to prevent the female protestor from invading the symbol of Victorian domesticity (Figure 6.20). It is true that Hunca Munca's suffrage struggle is tainted, since she becomes the dolls' servant to avoid ultimate control of her body through death. However, at this instance, one needs to compare Hunca Munca to Ribby and Jemima. Hunca Munca retains the new self she has created through her sartorial moves: she keeps the dolls' dresses.[82] Possibly, Potter did not feel completely at ease with socio-political changes, but the changes in her personal life seem to have encouraged her to long for a more liberated feminine identity that would permit, at least, the creation of an own domestic space. For while initially Hunca Munca is merely a marginalised intruder, whose lack of dress that exposes the body of a rodent without any visible characteristics of sexual identity and thus of associated gender identity, by the end of the story, her sartorial transformation visualises the acquisition of a gender identity. And though Hunca Munca still does not claim full ownership of herself, her sartorial reinvention suggests a gender identity that is different from the one Jemima, for instance, hoped metaphorically to don, for it is the result of a process that required agency and integration of external circumstances into her own narrative.

Written in 1905, when Warne proposed marriage, *The Tale of Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle* (1905) offers an even more interesting insight into Potter's engagement with women's gender identity, suggesting a growing desire for independence.[83] Mrs. Tiggy-winkle is an attired hedgehog, who is surprised by the human girl Lucy at her home, where she runs a laundry-business for other animals.[84] And while Lucy does not realise Mrs. Tiggy-winkle's animal nature when they have tea together, Mrs. Tiggy-winkle is quick to escape human contact as soon as possible. The fact that Potter told Warne, 'I

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[81] Smith, *Suffrage Discourse in Britain during the First World War*, p. 3.
[82] Linder, *History*, p. 77.
[83] Potter, *The Tale of Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle, in Tales* (1905), pp. 43-69. Hereafter referred to in text, illustrations and footnotes as *Tiggy-Winkle*.
[84] In this thesis, the spelling of Mrs. Tiggy-winkle's name is based on Potter's story and not the title; in other words, not a capital 'W' is used in the story.

think "Mrs. Tiggy" would be all right; it is a *girl's* book', might suggest that this story deals with issues that concern the female sex.[85] It is true, the story was conceived of as early as 1901 while Potter was holidaying at Lingholm, inspired by Potter's former Scottish washerwoman Kitty MacDonald, and was first written down in November 1902, after one-year-old Lucie Carr, daughter of the vicar, left her gloves at Potter's house.[86] Yet, it might be more than chance that Potter returned to this story in 1905, a story that presents Mrs. Tiggy-winkle as having created an independent feminine identity, expressed through sartorial images. This was when Potter was completing *Bad Mice* and becoming increasingly attached to Warne, who proposed in July (incurring the disapproval of her parents, who insisted the engagement be kept secret). Given Kitty's description as a 'round little old woman, as brown as a betty' and, respectively, Mrs. Tiggy-winkle's description as 'stout' and 'brown', Potter might be said to share the Victorian perceptions of bodies differing according to class, with the working-class female being 'coarse and robust'.[87] On the other hand, Potter expressed admiration for this woman when, in 1942, she wrote that while Kitty MacDonald 'dropped bob curtsies', she still considered her 'outspoken and very independent, proud and proper'.[88] To complicate matters further, the story is supposed to be Lucy's dream – but the narrator, in a postscript, insists it is not. My sartorial reading suggests that *Tiggy-winkle* can be considered a bolder exploration of gender identity, which, by being embedded in a dream, loses some of its threatening nature. Nonetheless, it is a story of a female character that has far surpassed Hunca Munca's attempts at independence. This female is no longer trying to create her own, independent existence by encroaching upon that of someone else's, but has successfully done so by washing the dress of other individuals who engage in dress practices as they attempt to write their own life story. Her possession of a 'silver safety-pin' might well imply that Mrs. Tiggy-winkle has created a lifestyle based on routines if we consider that when Potter mentions safety pins in her journal, she constructs them as possessing a long history.[89] When Potter writes about Kitty MacDonald, she mentions a 'silver brooch' that Kitty inherited from her mother who, in turn, had received it from her 20-year older sister, 'which should take one back into ancient history'.[90] She also muses as to when safety pins made their first

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[85] Linder, *History*, p. 156. Italics in the original.
[86] Linder, *History*, pp. 155-58.
[87] Michie, 'Under Victorian Skins: The Bodies Beneath', p. 409; Potter, '1892 Birnam, Monday, August 1st', in Linder, *Journal*, p. 243; Potter, *Tiggy-Winkle*, pp. 51, 69.
[88] Linder, *History*, p. 159.
[89] Potter, *Tiggy-Winkle*, p. 64.
[90] Potter, '1892 Birnam, Tuesday, October 18th', in Linder, *Journal*, p. 288.

appearance in 'the civilised world', admitting that, were she to respond without thinking, she would have dated them to 'primeval times'.[91] What is certain is that Mrs. Tiggy-winkle is shown as deliberately purchasing an item used by humans to maintain a tidy appearance. Potter's continued references to safety pins in the miniature letters suggest that they are a vital part of Mrs. Tiggy-winkle's narration of self. Mrs. Tiggy-winkle might not be a very literate or efficient individual, but she is certainly intent on maintaining her narrative when she decides to 'buy more safety pins' so as to prevent her washing from getting mixed up and sent to wrong people.[92]

Then there is Mrs. Tittlemouse, who appears as the culmination of Potter's exploration of identity-construction through female characters that take, metaphorically, possession of a gender identity. Mrs. Tittlemouse is introduced in *Flopsy Bunnies* as a plain field mouse, not attired and not anthropomorphised into a female being through visible physical characteristics of sexuality (Figure 6.22). By helping Benjamin and Flopsy to save the skin and life of their baby-bunnies, however, she actively rejects her mouse-life and chooses to form a non-traditional relationship with rabbits.[93] Her choice results in a nascent emancipation, expressed pictorially and verbally through Potter's illustration of Mrs. Tittlemouse being rewarded sartorially (Figure 6.23). When she is given 'enough rabbit-wool to make herself a cloak and hood, and a handsome muff and a pair of mittens', she finds herself in the position to be able to claim ownership of her body and visualise a gender identity.[94] In Figure 6.23 we see her depicted, in a Gidddensian sense, as having acquired a feminised gender identity, having fashioned herself into the image of a lady.

One year later, in *The Tale of Mrs. Tittlemouse* (1910), Mrs. Tittlemouse is portrayed as sartorially having decided on a more conservative gender identity, with similar attire to that of for instance Mrs. Rabbit (Figure 6.24).[95] Mrs. Tittlemouse, by now, is a meticulous housewife who despises intruders that leave her house messy. And while she does not put up any resistance when her neighbour, toad Mr. Jackson, rudely invades and dirties her house, she subsequently shows her resolution by narrowing the door and thus preventing him from re-entering her domestic space. While Mrs. Tittlemouse's pictorial depiction might suggest a lingering hesitation on Potter's side to imagine a more liberated gender identity expressed through less restrictive attire, it also

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[91] Potter, '1892 Birnam, Tuesday, October 18th', in Linder, *Journal*, p. 288.
[92] Linder, *History*, p. 78.
[93] Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, pp. 84-87.
[94] Potter, *Flopsy Bunnies*, p. 125.
[95] Potter, *The Tale of Mrs. Tittlemouse* (1910; London: Bloomsbury Books, 1993). Hereafter referred to in text, illustrations and footnotes as *Mrs. Tittlemouse*.

indicates Potter's own rejection of a lifestyle that prevented her from engaging with her life in a more 'hands-on' manner. When Mrs. Tittlemouse is depicted, in other words, as having chosen, from lifestyle options available, the one that suits her and that she defends energetically, her life can no longer be considered 'handed down' but 'adopted'.[96] Mrs. Tittlemouse is a different character from Jemima, who dreamt of having control of her body and her self-identity, grabbing any attire she finds to conceal this control; she is also distinct from Hunca-Munca, who rewrites herself into existence, but whose choices are still limited (and expressed by the dolls' dresses she appropriates). Mrs. Tittlemouse, in fact, goes through what Giddens calls 'series of "passages"', involving risk and negotiation – and thus achieves self-actualisation.[97]

The male sex and masculine gender identity

Surprisingly, this potential freedom to actively engage with gender identity, and, in Butler's terms, use agency to performatively reinscribe it, granted to female characters is denied to their male counterparts. Potter's depiction of male characters participates in the rhetoric of a patriarchal culture that saw masculinity as expressed through specific, masculinised behaviours. Even a brief look at Potter's characters shows that when Potter's adult males fail to be driven and strong, they are deprived of their clothes, unwillingly, as if being punished for their failure to be properly male. An even worse fate befalls those representatives of the male sex who actively turn their back on expected behaviour. Potter's sartorial images sometimes queer such characters, and in doing so, express a depreciative perception of the more effeminate male. Hence, they suggest agreement with late-nineteenth-century fears of the male homosexual, a figure who was perceived as transgressing gender boundaries (just as did the so-called Modern Woman or New Woman) through his rejection of what was considered to be 'natural masculinity'.[98] And through a series of stories where non-adult characters engage in playful cross-dressing or are stripped in a rape-like fashion, alterity in Potter's stories is vehemently rejected.

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[96] Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, pp. 81-83.
[97] Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, p. 79.
[98] Pykett, *Engendering Fictions*, pp. 18-19.

Figure 6.22: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Flopsy Bunnies* (1909), p. 114

Figure 6.23: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Flopsy Bunnies* (1909), p. 125

Figure 6.24: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Mrs. Tittlemouse* (1910), frontispiece

The unmanly, the dandy & sartorial dispossession

In Potter's stories, the male characters are expected to display masculinised behaviours if they hope to survive. Sartorially, failure to do is expressed with an enforced removal of attire that deprives them of the ability to visualise their male identity. One pertinent example is squirrel Timmy Tiptoes, provider for the family. Timmy is shown as thoughtfully reflecting on the lifestyle he wants for his family, when he 'took off his jacket and hung it on a twig' so as not to damage it while nut gathering with his wife Goody so their family will have sufficient food (and thus a future) after winter (Figure 6.25).[99]

Nakedness, here, does not imply removal of masculine identity, since it is done voluntarily and purposefully. Timmy, as a provider for his family, retains his maleness and is thus quite capable of again donning the jacket. As long as Timmy proves to be a capable provider, he is shown as also able to control his sartorial appearance. It is when he proves unable to defend himself against the attack by other squirrels, getting pushed into a tree hole because he runs away instead of heroically defending himself, that Timmy's maleness sartorially comes undone. There, he is confronted by another threatening male, the Chipmunk, who strips Timmy of his jacket and dresses him up in moss and a night cap (Figure 6.26). Here, Potter surely plays upon Victorian understanding of appropriate gender spaces, with the suggestion made that Timmy has been removed from the masculinised external space (where he could not compete) and placed into to the feminised space of the domestic. Once Timmy is in this internal, closeted space, it is difficult not to think of Foucault's and Giddens' discussion of the importance of control over one's body. For when Timmy allows his own body to be shaped by his captor into the fatness that hinders his escape, he becomes further de-masculinised, stripped of all his abilities to save himself.

Humorous emasculation results through Potter's engagement with two animal characters that bring to mind the figure of the dandy: Mr. Jackson in *Mrs. Tittlemouse* and Mr. Fisher in *The Tale of Mr. Jeremy Fisher* (1906) (Figures 6.27 and 6.28 respectively).[100] The dandy, rejecting the importance of lineage but emulating the image of a fine, elite gentleman through attention to 'all the inessentials of life', was

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[99] Potter, *Timmy Tiptoes*, p. 40.
[100] Potter, *The Tale of Jeremy Fisher*, in *Further Tales* (1906), pp. 33-59. Hereafter referred to in text, illustrations and footnotes as Jeremy Fisher.

considered by many as engaging in a 'kind of performance of aristocracy'.[101] At the end of the nineteenth century, this figure had been made popular through writers such as Oscar Wilde and Algernon Charles Swinburne, and politicians such as Joseph Chamberlain – all individuals who themselves lacked aristocratic lineage. Public opinion was divided, since the figure of the dandy was perceived by many not only as a threat to gender hierarchies but also to socio-political ones, with dandyism seen as a form of political destabilisation that threatened the *status quo*.

What is certain is that, in her miniature letters, Potter repeatedly took issue with Mr. Fisher's 'domestic arrangements' and lack of a 'lady to preside at the table', relating his supposedly unwholesome life to the dandy-existence by asserting that his 'sprigged waistcoat' and 'maroon tail-coat' had something to do with him not being married.[102] In *Jeremy Fisher*, it is mainly Potter's pictorial construction of Jeremy Fisher as a dandy that is of interest.[103] The story comically revolves around Mr. Fisher's difficulty in fishing because he first fears a beetle and a rat, is then plagued by a stickleback and finally barely escapes being eaten by a trout. It seems unlikely that Potter had her father, who enjoyed fishing, in mind when pictorially dressing Mr. Fisher into tight trousers, flower-print shirt and long jacket, along with rings and pointy shoes. Rather, based particularly on the illustrations, this fisher seems a fancily-dressed individual unprepared for this supposedly manly sport. Very interestingly, in fact, verbal and pictorial texts disagree on an important issue. While the text describes him as donning 'a pair of shiny goloshes' and thus dressing appropriately for the occasion when he begins his fishing expedition, the illustrations run contrary to the text and expose Mr. Fisher as wearing the pointy shoes he also wore while on land – but it is exactly the 'goloshes' that, according to the verbal text, save him from being swallowed by the trout (Figure 6.29).[104] It certainly seems noteworthy that Potter considered Mr. Fisher's pictorial representation as a dandy so important that she would so blatantly ignore a crucial element of her narrative.

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[101] Information on dandyism from Wilson, *Adorned in Dreams*, p. 182; John Street, *Politics & Popular Culture*, p. 37.
[102] Linder, *History*, p. 80.
[103] As already mentioned, this study does not consider sketches and drawings that existed prior to the publication. However, it is interesting that in the first sketches of Mr. Fisher published in the mid-1890s by Ernest Nister, this frog is drawn with a much less dandyish appearance.
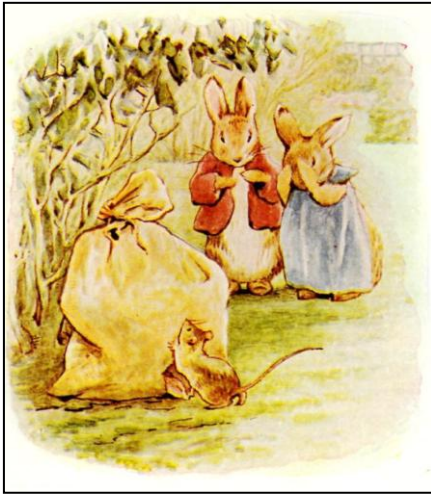[104] Potter, *Jeremy Fisher* p. 38

Figure 6 25: Illustration by Beatrix
Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Timmy
Tiptoes* (1911), p. 40

Figure 6.26: Illustration by Beatrix
Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Timmy
Tiptoes* (1911), p. 50

Figure 6.27: Illustration by Beatrix
Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Mrs.
Tittlemouse* (1910), p. 32

Figure 6.28: Illustration by Beatrix
Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Jeremy
Fisher* (1906), p. 57

Figure 6.29: Illustration by Beatrix
Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Jeremy
Fisher* (1906), *frontis piece*
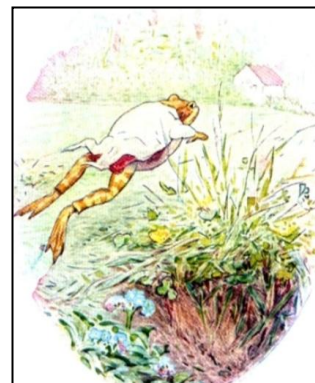
Figure 6.30: Illustration by Beatrix
Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Jeremy
Fisher* (1906), p. 57

Also noteworthy is the fact of regardless of what footwear he wore, Mr. Fisher is pictorially also depicted as returning home, to the domestic realm, shoeless. Maybe, the image of Mr. Fisher returning shoeless might be construed as suggesting that beneath this donned attire lies hidden an animal and thus a non-masculine identity (Figure 6.30). Maybe, it is simply meant to suggest that since Mr. Fisher is too ignorant to comprehend that masculine behaviours entail a masculine appearance, he is incapable of claiming a masculine identity for himself. Certainly, even lower-class and widowed Mrs. Tiggy-winkle is portrayed a few years later in a miniature letter as exclaiming that 'I would not marry Mr. Jeremy not for worlds'.[105] Jeremy Fisher is undoubtedly a bachelor, keeping company with others who share his sartorial tastes. Characterised by their names as pretentious and rather ridiculous, his friends, lizard Sir Isaac Newton and tortoise Mr. Alderman Ptolemy Tortoise, are both over-dressed. The first wears a very long dinner jacket, while the second a huge chain around his neck – and both seems frightfully out of place. Read in light of Giddens' theory, Mr. Fisher can be said to be depicted as having written his own individual gender narrative but having chosen out of a plurality of lifestyle choices that of the dandy to express who he wants to be. In this fictional world, however, it seems that Darwinian reality rules and effeminate males are exposed as incapable of participating in the masculinised domain of the outside; and they are chastised within their narrative as a result.

It is difficult to claim conclusively that Potter changed her attitude toward the dandy as the years passed – but while Mr. Fisher was portrayed as effeminate, he lacked the threatening undertones of Mr. Jackson who invades the space Mrs. Tittlemouse so bravely has carved out for herself. Interesting is first a comparison of the pictorial depiction of these two characters (Figures 6.27 and 6.28). While Mr. Fisher, in fact, is quite the beau, successfully carrying out the look of casual elegance even while fishing, Mr. Jackson, owing to his figure, appears to have donned dandyish clothes without being able to carry off the image of fine gentleman. In fact, it is hard to ignore the potential political implications of Potter's different use of the dandy figure. On the one hand, a negative reading of Jeremy Fisher's dandy-appearance is difficult: he might be a bit naïve and a bit ridiculous and lack so-called masculinity, but he is still a harmless individual that minds his business and a victim himself whose attire is stolen. On the other hand, Mr. Jackson is repeatedly associated with dirt. Compared to Mr. Fisher, who might live in 'damp house amongst the buttercups' and enjoy 'getting his feet wet', Mr. Jackson is a more disgusting character who gets his entire body wet, with 'water

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[105] Linder, *History*, p. 80. Italics in the original.

dripp[ing] off his tail coats'.[106] Given that, unlike Mr. Fisher, he does not own either a house or a boat, but lives 'in a drain below the hedge, in a very dirty ditch', one could speculate that the two differ in social class and that for Potter, political dangers and the possible threat to property seem to trump her anxiety about gender propriety.[107] Then again, to some extent, Mr. Jackson almost engages in metaphorical rape when he penetrates Mrs. Tiggy-winkle's pure existence, creating 'untidiness' and 'mess', with 'smears of honey' and 'moss' and 'marks of big and little dirty feet'.[108] His attire obviously visualises him as not being the type of man one would expect to engage in such an act of physical aggression. Mr. Jackson's dandyism could express Potter's perception of effeminacy being unnatural, threatening domesticity, even femininity. The story exposes him, however, as ultimately failing to impose his will on Mrs. Tiggy-winkle, suggesting that his aggression, just as his attire, has more show than substance.

Cross-dressing & being stripped: temporary queering

Very interesting insights regarding Potter's attitude toward normative heterosexuality can in fact be gained by reading her stories through the lens of Mary Zaborskis'and Kathryn Bond Stockton's understanding of orphanhood as imagining and allowing space for the fictional child to be queer, already mentioned in the Introduction. We will see this experience shown to be so traumatic that it results in the rejection of alterity and the embrace of normative heterosexuality.

Peter and Tom can be considered 'adrift in a world of possible gender identifications', given they were imagined by Potter in a period when masculinity was once again under scrutiny. In Edwardian England, masculinity might be characterised as expressed, at one extreme, through military and sporting endeavour; on the other, as being disassociated from pure physical vigour and understood more as a collection of moral attributes, such as self-reliance and industry.[109] In *Peter Rabbit* and *Tom Kitten*, both boys, apparently lacking paternal authority, disregard their mothers' words. On the surface, they receive a sort of divine punishment, when they fail to behave in what would be considered a masculine manner: Tom cannot defend himself and his sisters against the duck-attack, and Peter cannot outsmart the farmer. And just as Timmy

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[106] Potter, *Mrs. Tittlemouse*, pp. 30-33; Potter, *Jeremy Fisher*, pp. 34-35.
[107] Potter, *Mrs. Tittlemouse*, pp. 30-33.
[108] Potter, *Mrs. Tittlemouse*, p. 49.
[109] Zaborskis, 'Orphaning Queerness', p. 5.

Tiptoes is sartorially stripped of his visualisation of masculinity, so are Tom and Peter dispossessed of their attire. However, this dispossession needs to be considered much more closely in the case of the two boys. For Peter's narrative involves elements of what we might call 'queering', and this queering is shown to be a traumatic experience.

According to Foucault, in objective, scientific discourse, 'the question of sex was a constant preoccupation' at the turn of the twentieth century, and was, for instance, expressed through careful and constant regulation of schoolboys' lives as well as the encouragement of children to speak about sex in a way that indicated they had proper understanding of it.[110] As already mentioned in the Introduction, when Tom tries on his mother's bonnet, he temporarily disrupts, in Butler's terms, the stylised sartorial acts that contribute to the formation and visualisation of his gender identity that his mother attempts to impose – and interestingly, the consequences of this bonnet-wearing remain ambiguously uncommented on by Potter. Peter's first sartorial escapade, on the other hand, is full of intense gender anxiety for both mother and son. Verbally and pictorially, he is depicted as being made queer: he walks 'hand in hand' with his cousin, who is shown as assuming the dominant role, deciding what to do and, pictorially, having Peter follow him. Pictorially, furthermore, Peter assumes a feminised appearance.[111] Though Peter does not engage in cross-dressing, the visible markers of his masculine identity are replaced with a pocket handkerchief that, on Peter, brings to mind a female hood or cape – perhaps most reminiscent of Little Red Riding Hood, and certainly not a male clothing item (Figure 6.31).

Certainly, his enforced dress makes him visibly less masculine and when the verbal text adds that he feels 'poorly', the suggestion is made that this sartorial loss of visible masculinity is experienced physically and painfully.[112] This loss appears to be also associated with a painful loss of masculinised abilities, such as climbing trees: Peter, still hooded in femininity, falls 'down head first'.[113] When Peter, with Benjamin, hides in a basket from the cat, his feminisation is further asserted as he finds himself crying.

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[110] Michel Foucault, 'The Deployment of Sexuality', *The History of Sexuality - Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), p. 104.
[111] Potter, *Benjamin Bunny*, p. 69.
[112] Potter, *Benjamin Bunny*, p. 66.
[113] Potter, *Benjamin Bunny*, p. 70.

I cannot draw you a picture of Peter and Benjamin underneath the basket, because it was quite dark, and because the smell of onions was fearful; it made Peter Rabbit and little Benjamin cry.[114]

Also interesting here is the narrator's refusal to present Peter and Benjamin in this compromised position ('I cannot draw you a picture'). Possibly, it betrays Potter's unwillingness to acknowledge potential gender deviance. Obviously, this is a children's story and there is no explicit reference to sexuality in this scene. But in Butler's terms, the sojourn under the basket temporarily disrupts the power mechanisms (exercised through his family) that naturalise or normalise established notions of masculinity. And, in Foucault's terms, under this basket, social regulation of the boys' sexuality is no longer possible – for in this dark and pungent space, Peter is given the opportunity to fully explore as well as realise what aberrant sexuality means. The subsequent appearance of adult figures can be read as implying the abandonment of any potential homosexual experience and enforcement of normative heterosexuality. First comes Peter's uncle who, representing normative masculinity, enforces the wrongness of alterity in the masculinised manner of physical punishment. Then comes Peter's mother who, representing normative femininity, displays the feminised virtue of sympathy by being 'so glad to see that he had found his shoes and coat', the visual symbols of his masculinity, and forgiving him for his temporary transgression of gender norms by accepting him back into the folds of the family. Once back home, in possession of his jacket, Peter can now return to performing accepted sartorial acts that visualise his (reacquired) masculine and heterosexual identity.

Both Tom and Peter reappear in a later story; Tom is still a boy in *Samuel Whiskers* and is depicted as learning to reject gender experimentation and accept a heterosexual identity, while Peter has matured into a self-sufficient adult in *The Tale of Mr. Tod* (1912), having already rejected any vestige of the homosexual gender identity hinted at in the earlier book.[115] Let us first look at what happens to Tom in *Samuel Whiskers* once he is kidnapped inside the farmer's house, where he lives with his family, by the rat couple Samuel Whiskers and his wife, Anna Maria, who plan to eat him. During his capture under the attic floorboards, he is presented as being trapped in a confined, violent, and perhaps even homoerotic space.

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[114] Potter, *Benjamin Bunny*, p. 681.
[115] Potter, *The Tale of Mr. Tod*, electronic version (1912; [n.p.]: [n.pub.], [n.d.]) found at <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/etcbin/toccer-new2?id=PotMtod.sgm&images=images/modeng&data=/texts/english/modeng/parsed&tag=public&part=1&division=div1> [accessed 12.4.2009], pp. 7-94. Hereafter referred to in text and footnotes as *Mr. Tod*.

Figure 6.31: Illustration by Beatrix Potter, in Beatrix Potter's *Benjamin Bunny* (1904), p. 68

Tom, physically forced into removing the vestiges of his masculine identity through enforced dress removal, learns to feel repulsion for any inappropriate gender choices. The house, with its 'cupboards and passages' and the possibility of 'a little secret staircase', draws Tom into what seems to be a representation of his unconscious, where the 'queer noises' he hears inside the thick walls suggest that he is forced into an almost queering experience.[116] Tom does 'not know his way' yet and it becomes 'most confusing in the dark', for once the 'old man rat' gets hold of him, Tom is stripped of his sartorial markers of masculine identity.[117] On a literal level, Tom is supposed to be turned into a dumpling, to be devoured by Samuel Whiskers. However, the description of Tom, naked, who 'bit and spat, and mewed and wriggled', brings to mind images of rape, while the rolling-pin has phallic associations.[118] The rat becomes the aggressor who threatens to violate, in Butler's terms, the established norms that regulate Tom's heterosexual identity. Once again, the child is depicted as relying on adults for his rescue, and once again, male intervention is required. It takes the dog, John Joiner, to scare the rats away; Tom's return to what Potter surely regards as the right path is signalled through a 'hot bath', administered by his mother. Interestingly, this bath is not portrayed as a repulsive experience as it was in *Tom Kitten*, but a necessary one to cleanse him of the last vestiges of his almost-rape, the 'butter' that had replaced his sartorial masculinity and has soiled his body.[119] Tom's experience proves traumatic, leaving him with a lasting fear of rats, and thus suggests that as Tom writes the narrative of his adult gender identity, he will not stray again from his masculine gender identity.

Support for the acceptance of normative gender identity is also echoed in one of Potter's most intense stories, *Mr. Tod*, where Potter once again seems to play upon the potentially homoerotic relationship between Peter and Benjamin. By the opening of this story, both Benjamin and Peter are shown as having chosen a heterosexual gender identity, with no interest in any homoerotic experience. By this time, Benjamin has married and has his own family; while no information is given about Peter's marital status, he is sartorially shown as being in full possession of his masculinity, wearing 'a blue coat' (though the immediate mention of his 'hunting for dandelions' might be considered to add some queerness to the image). But over the course of the story, Peter and Benjamin once again find themselves in close physical proximity in a dark space. Benjamin requests Peter's help after his children are kidnapped by the badger Tommy

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[116] Potter, *Tom Kitten*, p. 70.
[117] Potter, *Tom Kitten*, pp. 82, 88, 80.
[118] Potter, *Tom Kitten*, p. 100.
[119] Potter, *Tom Kitten*, p. 104.

Brock and they dig a tunnel during the night beneath the house where the children are held hostage. What is most striking about Potter's treatment of this event, though, is not what happens in the tunnel (which is largely undescribed), but the emphatic way in which she remains silent on what happens. For when it returns to the cousins at 'sunrise', there is no indication that attire was removed; in fact, the text asserts the orthodox maleness of the two rabbits and their relationship on the morning following their adventure. These two male bunnies distance themselves from each other: though 'Benjamin was on his back', Peter 'was outside the tunnel'. It appears that the brief, homoerotic experience under that basket years ago has cured any potential sexual ambiguity and enforced a heterosexual gender identity that allows these bunnies to display the masculinised traits that Timmy, for instance, lacked: namely, courage and resolution. For heterosexual Benjamin and Peter are here shown as engaging in the masculinised task of saving young bunnies and preventing the stripping of their natural attire, just as, once, old Mr. Bunny had saved them.

Conclusion

In Potter's stories, both female and male characters are shown as faced with the possibility of choosing their self-identities. But, moreover, their ability to achieve this self-actualisation is repeatedly associated with the ability to choose and retain possession of their attire. Potter grew up in a restrictive environment and was taught conservative values. It is probably to be expected that her characters would not espouse gender identities we today would consider progressive, nor would want to overturn hegemonic structures that restrict self-actualisation. Potter's male characters maintain their attire when they display masculinised virtues of determination and courage and lose it when they do not. Her representations of female characters are sometimes more progressive, since they, too, maintain their attire only when they display these masculinised traits as well. By and large, however, even these female characters are depicted as espousing a conservative lifestyle of domesticity. And any form of gender transgression or experimentation is associated with danger and fear. However, reading this sartorial engagement through the prism of queer theory helps illuminate the tension and ambiguities in Potter's stories, indicating that, in this fictional universe, identity is not necessarily fixed, inevitably determining who a person is. Even if some of Potter's stories portray animal characters as failing to write the narratives of their own identity,

the suggestion is that hegemonic structures are the ones that prevent them. Even when some of Potter's stories portray animal characters as experimenting with or choosing to write an inappropriate narrative, the suggestion is that beyond hegemonic structures lies a realm of other, albeit inappropriate, choices. In these stories identity, like dress, is the product of personal choice and social enforcement, a continuous performance of who a character wants or has to be, never a universal, essential 'this is who I am'.

Chapter 7
Conclusion

New perspectives

The central argument of the study

This thesis has examined a range of titles from *fin-de-siècle* Britain. It was a time when old hierarchies became less rigid, and identity became less a matter of one's birth and more something that one could hope to shape.[1] Technological and scientific, social and political, as well as philosophical and psychological developments led people increasingly to question notions of class, gender and nationality. Long-established mechanisms of control gradually lost their power to curtail this questioning. One of the principal questions of this thesis has been to determine whether the texts written for children at that time in any way contributed to bringing about this shift, inspiring young readers to question what they had been taught, by sowing, as Kimberley Reynolds puts it, 'the seeds of change' and ceasing to teach 'prevailing values and accepted behaviours' of their times.[2] Inspired by the increasing scholarship on the significance of dress in the construction of identity both in real life and literature, my central assumption has been that an exploration of discursive images of dress, undress and cross-dressing would give us a deeper insight of how children's stories construct class, gender and national identities that cannot be contained by established structures and mechanism of control. Thus, by drawing together a range of scholarly research and academic theories, this study has explored a selection of children's stories by female authors published between 1880 and 1915 to uncover, metaphorically speaking, the tears and rips of the authors' preoccupations about, anxieties with, and excitement over the socio-political changes occurring at the *fin-de-siècle*.

What is clear is just how central images of clothing – both what is worn and states of undress – are to these books, and how my selected authors use these images to support or to question socio-economic, gender and political hierarchies. This said, examining the selected stories readily revealed great variety in the way dress is used in the representations of child and animal characters, even among the works of a single

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[1] Schaffer, *Literature and Culture at the Fin de Siècle*, p. 3; Linda K. Hughes, '1870', in Tucker, *Companion*, pp. 35-50.

[2] Kimberley Reynolds, 'Introduction', in *Children's Literature Studies. A Research Handbook*, eds. Matthew O. Grenby and Kimberley Reynolds (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 1-10 (pp. 1-2).

author. Each of the authors whose work I have considered uses the semiotics of clothing to suit their point of view and their particular period. Yet, in all the works examined, the underlying anxiety about who the fictional protagonists are, should be, or want to be, is paralleled by the characters' anxiety about or because of their attire. My argument is that reading the *fin-de-siècle* 'language of attire' allows us to recognise the double address in the texts and realise they contain progressive, even radical ideas concerning how to live and who to be in the new century, more liberated from fashion's tenets but also from social constraints.

Certainly, the stories discussed have relatively simple plotlines and language. Nonetheless, the 'language of dress' can certainly productively be interrogated in these books. What my reading of clothes reveals, in comparison to other readings of these works, is that they contain more complex social commentary than initially apparent. We need to remember that clothing was a sign-system that many contemporary readers would have been able to read very fluently. As Christine Bayles Kortsch stresses, women writers employed their 'dual literacy', the 'language of print and the language of cloth […] as a form of authority'.[3] Burnett, Nesbit and Potter were all, to varying degrees, dissatisfied with contemporary gender expectations that wanted to define what women should or should not do, be or not be, or with whom they could consort. As we have seen, though, their resistance to gender expectations did not usually involve overt and public expression: they were not, for example, feminist activists; they often refrained from even expressing support for such movements. That does not mean, however, that they did not construct their own self-narratives. On the contrary, all three authors literally wrote and drew who they wanted to be into existence through their pen and their stories – and as they did, they quite unashamedly and very successfully transgressed social tenets. And as we saw, these three authors were well aware of the language of attire in subtly visualising transgressions.

Admittedly, the stories examined in this study do not feature adult female characters (or, for that matter, male characters either) who engage in any eccentric or unconventional sartorial practices. However, they do contain a plethora of child and animal characters who, voluntarily or not, dress and undress and cross-dress in ways that invite analysis. As we saw, on the surface, their dress engagement seems mostly plot-related, usually making the conventional point that appearances can be deceiving and do not necessarily express who we are. Such a reading of dress indeed echoes claims made, for instance, by Lindsy M. Lawrence in her discussion of the way

[3] Kortsch, *Dress Culture*, p. 183.

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serialised novels in '[m]agazines also use fashion as a plot or structural device', as in Thomas Hardy's *The Woodlanders* (serialised in *Macmillan's Magazine* 1886-87).[4] In fact, however, Simon Gatrell's *Thomas Hardy Writing Dress* (2011) has shown that, particularly in Hardy's work, dress has a much more complex significance than driving plot forward since it is intricately involved in Hardy's construction of the characters' identities.[5]

My sartorial reading further reveals that the child or animal figure, with its promise of innocence but also change, is employed in the selected stories consistently to circumvent contemporary mechanisms of control that define who we are – and to show through its engagement with dress a very modern notion of identity: that 'who we are' depends on us. Burnett, Nesbit and Potter increasingly propose through the language of dress that acceptance of an imposed, conventional identity – expressed through bodily regulation – is destructive for both the individual and society, and that it may be challenged. Of course, child readers may not have perceived or been able to articulate this challenge to social codes, but the fact remains that the metaphorical seeds of doubt were being sown. For, as the fictive child or animal rids itself of conventional or restrictive dress it has learned to wear, or dons supposedly inappropriate dress it has also learned not to wear, it invites readers not only to question established hierarchies and boundaries, but also themselves. And at least occasionally, dress images allow the authors metaphorically to strip identity of its purported innateness, exposing what Foucault explains as a method of control and the reality of performativity.

In a Giddensian sense, we see in the selected stories characters who metaphorically assume agency through their dress practices, refusing to accept an appearance and, thus, an identity imposed upon them because of whether they are born boy or girl, rich or poor, English or 'foreign'. Identity is shown as unable to be contained by and expressed through dress as a simple 'this is me'; instead, it is increasingly constructed as the complex, sometimes even contradictory product of reflective self-construction, dynamic and fluid. And even if a text ultimately does not undermine existing structures through the dress engagement of its characters, it destabilises them. As we have seen, even texts we might consider conservative today in their protection of the *status quo*, when examined through the lens of dress, are revealed as more critical of prevailing models of identity.

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[4] Lawrence, *Seriality and Domesticity: The Victorian Serial and Domestic Ideology in the Family Literary Magazine*, p. 179.
[5] Gatrell, *Thomas Hardy Writing Dress*.

Summary

I began this study by wondering whether the texts written during the *fin-de-siècle* and in the years before the First World War represented, or even hastened, the end of an era by exhibiting a challenge to existing socio-cultural hierarchies. My argument was that reading the texts through the lens of attire would allow me to detect subtle differences in the authors' engagement with and resistance to traditional norms and tenets. I hope now that my research and analysis have uncovered new insights: that by dressing, undressing and cross-dressing the child and animal body, the writers construct new discursive models of identity. The child and animal characters in the texts I explored traverse the *fin-de-siècle* increasingly confidently; on the one hand shaped by contemporary events, discoveries and theories, but on the other also shaping it, offering readers new images and possibilities of identity beyond what they have been taught to believe or even imagine.

Chapter One introduced the importance of sartorial images in stories for children through a brief discussion of how Beatrix Potter's *Tom Kitten*, by employing dress images to question and confirm hierarchies and boundaries, adds to the discursive construction of identities. In Chapter Two, I went on to examine the intricate involvement of clothes in contemporary public discourses. Fashion dictates, as we saw, were shaped by and shaped socio-political developments, affecting in turn diverse, at times contradictory, constructions of masculinity and femininity as well as class and nationality, with the body of the discursive boy and girl not escaping such inscriptions. Dress served to identify, defend and challenge boundaries, empower and disempower men and women, boys and girls.

The following chapters then explored how the child's and animal's doffing and donning, stripping and being stripped, masquerading and cross-dressing increasingly served metaphorically to question and confirm, challenge and traverse social hierarchies in the negotiation of who one could be. In the selected stories, clothes are repeatedly interwoven in the characters' engagement with who they and others are, who they want to be and who they want others to be. In the 'papillonades' of the early nineteenth century, we saw that despite providing some playful commentary, dress is essentially employed to confirm existing hierarchies; in contrast, my reading show that later nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century texts by male authors become increasingly subversive, providing a much more positive reception of transgression. In

Burnett's stories, we saw how dress, on the one hand, confirms class structures and criticises social transgressions, but on the other also exposes that that lack of social awareness can lead to society's moral decay. Overall, by visualising the expression of this social awareness through the dress engagement of the discursive child, Burnett's stories suggest that who we are does not depend on appearances but on actions – regardless of what class one belongs to. Young Mary Lennox and her cousin Colin Craven, as well as Marco Loristan, Cedric Errol and Sara Crewe, belong to the upper classes. But Becky is a servant and Dick a boot-black. Irrespective of their class background, all realise that, while they cannot transgress class boundaries, they can still improve upon their identity, and that it is not governed by delimiting stereotypes as much as might have been the case in the past. These fictive children may not be yet portrayed as sartorially writing their own identities, but as they learn to question appearances, they also learn to question what they have been taught and to realise the need for self-improvement.

In the Bastable stories of E. Nesbit we witnessed more radical narratives through the children's evident awareness of their suffocation by restrictive attire and their active stripping and cross-dressing. Nesbit exposes society as impoverished, with restrictive attire visualising restrictive rules that stifle imagination and self-actualisation. The Bastable children realise that – unlike Burnett's characters – they have options of who to be and metaphorically discard imposed models of identity by refusing to be marked (and mark others) through attire. And as the Bastable children doff attire that is gender-, class- and nationality-appropriate and instead don clothes that do not express their gender, or class or nationality, we see them engaging in a performance – and realise that identity is malleable. In Potter's stories, we witness dress functioning in a slightly different manner. Here, the ability to acquire, retain or repossess attire increasingly suggests the ability to resist external pressures to conform to expectations and make specific life choices that ultimately allow the animal characters to construct a reflective self-narrative. When Pigling Bland and Pig-wig, for instance, so joyfully leave behind county boundaries, still wearing attire that almost mirrors their joy, their future is almost bursting with potential, promising ultimate escape from a world (or a time) that imposes normative identities.

Further perspectives

This study has also uncovered the need for future research and laid the foundations for it. As discussed in the Introduction, queer scholarship, in particular, has engaged with how dress images contribute to the construction of gender identity. My research has focused only on a particular group of texts over a given period, only tangentially looking at the works of writers from different periods. As such, it has not exhausted what can be learned by exploring how writers and illustrators, including those from other periods, genres and countries, use clothing to construct national, class or gender identity. Consider the following, indicative, discussion of the contribution of attire images to the changing ideas of girlhood and femininity – as well as identity – in domestic stories written, for instance, in the United States or stories belonging to the genre of fantasy during the *fin-de-siècle* or stories, fantasy or not, around the mid-twentieth century. The one element the following texts have in common is that they, in theory or practice, remove a female (semi)-orphaned or essentially orphaned character temporarily from feminised (and controlled) domestic space.

In nineteenth-century America, we come across semi-orphaned and initially tomboyish protagonist Katy Carr in Susan Coolidge's *What Katy Did* (1872), already briefly referred to in Chapter Four. Coolidge's story reveals that just as in English equivalents, attire repeatedly confirm status: Katy is punished for 'transgressing gender codes', as Shirley Foster and Judy Simons put it.[6] When young Katy imagines herself as an adult, she wishes 'to *do* something grand', not just things she dislikes, such as 'sew or knit garters' – and, as she puts it, this might involve wearing 'armour and a helmet on my head'.[7] Sartorial ineptness is repeatedly employed to visualise Katy's rejection of domesticity and enclosed spaces. The reader sees that, unlike her Aunt Izzie, who as a child 'loved to sit as Curly Locks did, sewing long seams in the parlour', Katy (the modern, realistic girl) 'tore her dress every day, hated sewing'.[8] And adult Katy, shown through her continuous travels as more liberated from feminised domestic confinement, is also sartorially portrayed, to some extent, as resisting social controls. In the sequel, *Clover* (1888), she insists she will not 'go […] in the same direction like a flock of

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[6] Shirley Foster and Judy Simons, *What Katy Read: Feminist Re-readings of "Classic" Stories for Girls*, eds. Shirley Foster and Judy Simons (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1995), pp. 107-26 (pp. 117-19). For more on Katy's gender construction, see also: Jenny Robinson, '"Splendid Fun" in "Elsewhere": Textual Treats for Contemporary Readers in Susan Coolidge's What Katy Did and Other "Classic" North American Stories for Girls', in Neill Campbell , ed., *American Youth Culture*s(Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2004), pp. 88-108.
[7] Woolsey, *What Katy Did*, p. 28.Italics in the original.
[8] Woolsey, *What Katy Did*, p. 10. The spelling of Aunt Izzie's name in *Clover* is Izzy.

sheep' when it comes to her wedding dress.[9] Overall, however, attire images serve to reinforce gender boundaries. There is, for example, the description of her wedding dress of 'creamy white silk […] trimmed with old lace' which harkens back to old traditions as well as Katy's description as 'a little pale, but otherwise *exactly like her usual self*'.[10] Katy's identity, in other words, is constructed, sartorially at least, in this story as fixed, even resistant to efforts to change it. Compare this with Katy, who has not engaged nor will engage in either meaningful sartorial resistance or self-actualisation, to Sara in *Little Princess*, who 'in her short, tight old frock, climbing the stairs to the attic, was *quite a different creature*' – and it becomes clear that further exploration of this and other texts might provide fascinating insights to how identity was being constructed on the other side of the Atlantic.[11]

Moreover, use of dress images is not limited to works of domestic fiction. If we turn to the genre of fantasy, we again witness dress images employed in a *fin-de-siècle* piece of work to engage with gender identity. Take, for instance, Wendy Darling in James Matthew Barrie's (1860-1937) *Peter Pan, or the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up* (1911; a version of a play that debuted in 1904).[12] Young Wendy is invited by Peter, a boy who can fly and refuses to grow up, to the mythical Neverland to be a mermaid, out of reach of the control mechanisms of the adult, conservative world signified by her parents. Scholarship on gender construction in *Peter Pan* is controversial, with Wendy described by some as expressing the Victorian feminine identity of mother, while by others as expressing this feminine identity but also as acquiring a dynamic female selfhood.[13] Even a brief look at attire images suggests that Wendy's construction reinforces the traditional role of nurturer and mother figure. We see that when Peter invites Wendy to Neverland, he is already quite confident of her sartorial literacy that signifies domesticity through statements such as that she can 'darn our clothes, and

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[9] Woolsey, *Clover*, digitised edn. (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1896 [1888]), p. 16.

[10] Woolsey, *Clover*, pp. 74-75. Italics in the original.

[11] Burnett, *Little Princess*, p. 82. Italics in the original.

[12] James Matthew Barrie, *Peter Pan, or the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up* (1911; Middlesex.: Puffin, 1985), p. 50. Hereafter referred to in text and footnotes as *Peter Pan*.

[13] For scholarship on gender in *Peter Pan*, see for instance: John Shout, 'From Nora Helmer to Wendy Darling: If You Believe in Heroines, Clap Your Hands,' *Modern Drama*, 35 (September 1992), pp. 353-64; Rachel Prusko, 'Queering the Reader in Peter and Wendy,' *Jeunesse: Young People, Texts, Cultures*, 4.2 (2012), 107+. *Literature Resource Center*; Emily Clark, 'The Female Figure in J. M. Barrie's Peter Pan: The Small and the Mighty,' in Donna R. White and C. Anita Tarr, eds., *J. M. Barrie's Peter Pan In and Out of Time: A Children's Classic at 100* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 2006), pp. 303-20; hereafter referred to in footnotes as *J. M. Barrie's Peter Pan In and out of Time*; M. Joy Morse, 'The Kiss: Female Sexuality and Power in J. M. Barrie's Peter Pan,' in *J. M. Barrie's Peter Pan In and out of Time*, pp. 281-302; Christine Roth, 'Babes in Boy-Land: J. M. Barrie and the Edwardian Girl', in *J. M. Barrie's Peter Pan In and out of Time*, pp. 47-68.

make pockets for us'.[14] While in Neverland, this sartorial literacy is further confirmed through Wendy's portrayal as enjoying the 'sewing and darning' in almost sensual terms, 'fling[ing] up her arms' and her 'face beam[ing]'.[15] We also see dress employed to curtail Wendy's attempts of using her sartorial literacy to transgress established gender roles. For instance, when she tries to be noticed by Peter as partner, not a mother, after having left Neverland, Peter 'never noticed' that her quite unconventional dress, 'woven from leaves and berries', has become 'short'.[16] And when Peter, visiting her some years later, is described as 'not noticing *any difference*' since 'her white dress might have been the nightgown in which he had seen her first', once again we see a female character constructed (as with Katy) as having failed to engage in (sartorial) self-actualisation – and again, despite conscious efforts to assume agency.[17]

Looking at post-war children's literature, we can see that in contrast, dress is involved in constructing new, more transgressive models of femininity in texts. Let us first consider another work of fantasy: C. S. Lewis's (1898-1953) *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* (1952), a sequel to *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950).[18] Of course, we need to accept that Lewis, still relying on gender stereotypes, ultimately does not construct a truly liberated version of femininity and that any potential transgression is diffused by being safely located within a fantasy world.[19] Yet, dress images confirm the contention put forth by some scholars, such as Monika Hilder, that if the Narnia stories are read outside traditional models of gender criticism, a 'radical theological

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[14] Barrie, *Peter Pan,* p. 50.
[15] Barrie, *Peter Pan,* pp. 101-02.
[16] Barrie, *Peter Pan,* p. 209.
[17] Barrie, *Peter Pan,* p. 214. Italics mine.
[18] Clive Staples Lewis, *The Voyage of the Dawn Trader*, digitised edn. (1952; New York: Harper Collins, 1994). Hereafter referred to in text and footnotes as *Dawn Trader*.
[19] Scholars have pointed out that for all her valiant behavior, Lucy is still associated with the feminine virtues of nurture and compassion, for instance through the healing cordial Father Christmas gives her in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* or her decision to comfort Eustace after he is turned into a dragon in the *Dawn Treader*. Others, such as Karin Fry, contend that Lucy's character is problematic from a feminist perspective because Lucy's engagement in masculinised activities suggests that the masculine gender is somehow better. For both older and more recent scholarship on Lewis's construction of gender see, for instance: Stella Gibbons, 'Imaginative Writing,' in Jocelyn Gibb, ed., *Light on C. S. Lewis* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1965), pp. 86-101; John Goldthwaite, *The Natural History of Make-Believe: A Guide to the Principal Works of Britain, Europe, and America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Candice Fredrick, and Sam McBride, 'Battling the Woman Warrior: Females and Combat in Tolkien and Lewis', *Mythlore*, 25.3-4 (2007), 29+. *Literature Resource Center*; Peter Hunt, qtd. in Devin Brown, 'Introduction', in *Inside Narnia: A Guide to Exploring the Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2005), pp. 10-18 (pp. 14-15); Karin Fry, 'No Longer a Friend: Gender in Narnia', in Gregory Bassham and Jerry L. Walls, eds., *The Chronicles of Narnia and Philosophy: The Lion, the Witch, and the Worldview*, vol. 15 (Illinois: Open Court Publishing, 2005), pp. 155- 66; Mary Stewart van Leeuwen, *A Sword Between the Sexes? C. S. Lewis and the Gender Debates* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2010); Jean E. Graham, 'Women, Sex, and Power: Circe and Lilith in Narnia,' *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 29 (2004), pp. 32-44; Ann Loades, 'C. S. Lewis on Gender,' *Priscilla Papers*, 24.1 (Winter 2010), pp. 19-24.

feminism' can be detected.[20] Interestingly, given that this study has sought to expose how dress images visualise an increasingly fluid identity, Elizabeth Baird Hardy prefaces Hilder's work by claiming that characters such as Lucy Pevensie 'embody a whole *range* of human, and heroic possibilities'.[21] In the first Narnia story, Lucy Pevensie, together with her siblings, discovered the mythical country Narnia and battled with the White Witch Jadis, becoming, eventually, as prophesied, kings and queens there before returning many years later to their real world. In *Dawn Treader*, Lucy and her brother Edmund, together with their unpleasant cousin Eustace, are suddenly drawn into the painting of a ship; they are rescued by Prince Caspian of Narnia and travel with him to many strange places. Dress is employed to construct a gender identity that at times defies rigid categories. Compare, for instance, Lucy's near cross-dressing, when Prince Caspian offers Lucy his own clothes, given that no women's clothes can be found on board, to the cross-dressings we saw in the Bastable stories or *Wind in the Willows*. We now witness not only female-to-male cross-dressing, but also a cross-dressing that does not involve gender-disguise. The ship's captain, Lord Drinian, acknowledges Lucy's gender by greeting her in a manner traditionally reserved for greeting a woman, despite the men's clothing she has donned, by kissing her hand. Furthermore, her cross-dressing is not portrayed as causing feelings of discomfort, with Lucy feeling she 'could manage' even if the clothes are 'too big' for her.[22] This painless, albeit temporary, transgression of social controls is further expressed through another sartorial image we saw in the Bastable stories: discarding shoes. Let us recall that when the Bastable children remove their 'shoes and stockings', the reference to the 'savagest breast' that is 'soothe[d]' owing to the 'messiness of clay' suggested a process both liberating and painful.[23] Now consider how much more positive, much less painful Lucy's removal of shoes is:

[20] Monika Baird Hilder, *The Feminine Ethos in C.S. Lewis's Chronicles of Narnia*, ed. Karen Marguerite Radell, vol. 10 (New York: Peter Lang, 2012), p. 12; for more on older and more recent scholarship not condemning Lewis for being sexist, see, for instance: Roger Lancelyn Green and Walter Hooper, *C. S. Lewis: A Biography* (London: William Collins, 1974); Kathryn Lindskoog, 'Women', in Jeffrey D. Schultz and John G. West, eds., *The C. S. Lewis Readers' Encyclopedia* (Jr, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1998), pp. 370-71; David Emerson, 'Innocence as a Super-Power: Little Girls on the Hero's Journey,' *Mythlore*, 18.1/2 (Fall/Winter 2009), pp. 131-47.
[21] Elizabeth Baird Hilder, 'Preface', in *The Feminine Ethos in C. S. Lewis's Chronicles of Narnia*, pp. ix-xi (p. x). Italics mine.
[22] Lewis, *Dawn Treader*, p. 18.
[23] Nesbit, *Wouldbegoods*, p. 133.

Lucy was of course barefoot, having kicked off her shoes while swimming, but that is no hardship if one is going to walk on downy turf. It was delightful to be ashore again […] Lucy found the sand pleasant to her feet.[24]

Certainly, as dress images show, this Lucy is a different discursive girl from the ones we encountered in pre-war stories, with a gender identity that is governed by much fewer restrictions (and much fewer feelings of guilt about transgressing these restrictions) than her literary predecessors. Katy or Sara or Wendy might have dreamt of escaping their imposed roles and normative identity, but ultimately they could not. Lucy can don boys' clothes and, at least to some extent, she can metaphorically don their roles outside domestic space – as when she yields an axe to assist Caspian in fighting a giant Sea Serpent (even if she never actually uses it).

And even if we reject works of fantasy as representative for an exploration of changing ideas of gender identity through a sartorial prism, we see dress involved in the changing versions of femininity in non-fantasy fiction as well. Consider, for instance, another female-to-male cross-dressing episode in a mid-twentieth century spy story, published in the United States: Louise Fitzhugh's *Harriet the Spy* (1964).[25] The story is about eleven-year-old, essentially orphaned Harriet Welsch, living in New York and raised almost exclusively by her nanny. Harriet is shown as still existing in a world of strict gender divisions where single-sex education is enforced after the sixth grade, but as also engaging in a (for the time) quite unfeminine pursuit of playing detective and spying on others. Once again, ultimately we see gender transgression curtailed: mechanisms of social control – in the form of her parents and the school principle – force her to reform and abandon her spying for the socially acceptable position of editor of the school newspaper. However, let us look at just one dress instance from this story which illustrates, both verbally and pictorially, just how much the construction of gender identity has changed from that witnessed in texts written prior to the First and the Second World War.[26] When Harriet sets out on her spy routine, her sartorial construction suggests almost a replacement of a so-called feminine (and appropriate)

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[24] Lewis, *Dawn Treader*, p. 39.
[25] Louise Fitzhugh, *Harriet the Spy*, digitised edn. (1964; [n.p.]: Random House, 2009).
[26] When the story was published, Harriet's portrayal initially incited heated reactions that led to it being banned in many schools. For more on transgressive gender identity in *Harriet the Spy*, see for instance: Zaborskis, 'Orphaning Queerness', pp. 1-25; Kathleen T. Horning, 'On Spies and Purple Socks and Such,' *The Horn Book Magazine*, 81.1 (2005), pp. 49-55; Roberta Seelinger Trites, *Waking Sleeping Beauty: Feminist Voices in Children's Novels* (Iowa City: Iowa Press, 1997), pp. 63-79.

identity with a more masculine one; according to Kathleen Horning, Harriet in fact cross-dresses:

> Her spy clothes consisted first of all of an ancient pair of blue jeans, so old that her mother had forbidden her to wear them' […] belt with hooks to carry her spy tools […] an old dark-blue sweatshirt with a hood […] Old pair of blue sneakers with holes over each of her little toes.[27]

And there is also Harriet's pictorial depiction of Harriet's cross-dressing, created by the author herself (Figure 7.2) – and if we compare this illustration to that of Sara, the extent to which the visualisation of feminine gender identity, through attire, differed between the pre-war and post-war periods (Figure 7.1). Certainly, Sara's pictorial depiction, with her loose and unrevealing dress, already contains progressive notions (figure 7.1). It not only visualises a new version of girlhood but also suggests the possibility of identity being pliable – and thus most likely contributed to the spreading of these seeds of doubt that ushered in the end of an era and a devastating war. First, girlhood is constructed as more innocent through the rejection of the highly feminised look of the so-called Gibson Girl, discussed in Chapter Two, that might have been worn by young women who espoused new freedoms but who still subjected their body to restrictive attire. Second, let us recall that we saw Sara assuming agency and actively participating in her social and sartorial reformation by rejecting attire that wanted her to accept a fashion that restricted her to bygone times and versions of identity. Yet, if we compare her to Harriet, we realise just how much changed within 59 years (Figure 7.2). Harriet, first of all, is alone, without a male present to protect her. Second, depicted from behind, wearing jeans, sweatshirt and sneakers, Harriet might well be a boy, her clothes fully concealing her so-called feminine identity.

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[27] Fitzhugh, *Harriet the Spy*,[n.p.]; Horning, 'On Spies and Purple Socks and Such', p. 49.

Figure 7.1: Illustration by Ethel Franklin Betts. in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *Little Princess* (1905)

Figure 7.2: Illustration by Louise Fitzhugh, in Louise Fitzhugh's *Harriet the Spy* (1964)

Claiming that authors increasingly employed dress images to toy with the notion of a transgressive identity during the *fin-de-siècle* might be an over-statement. But it is certainly the case that writers consistently and increasingly constructed an identity characterised by a plasticity that cannot be easily defined or contained and that dress played a vital part in its visualisation. This study has examined how the semiotics of dress in a small range of texts contributed to visualising these new, more malleable forms of identity – and it has shown the significance of further investigation and the potential for other applications. As society changes, we continue to alter our understanding of who we are or can be in a continuously globalising world where scientific and technological as well as socio-political changes challenge boundaries held to be impassable. Should we not further explore how literature, through verbal and pictorial images of dress, subtly, sometimes obliquely, influences this understanding by concealing, obstructing, exposing and thus constructing new versions of identity – versions so different from each other as those of Sara and Harriet?

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