

**ANNE-GIRLS: INVESTIGATING CONTEMPORARY GIRLHOOD THROUGH *ANNE
WITH AN E***

by

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Anne of Green Gables is a 1908 coming of age novel by L.M. Montgomery. Adapted into over 40 multimedia projects since its publication, it has a significant historical and cultural presence. This research blends feminist media and literature analysis in an investigation of the representation of girlhood in *Anne with an E*, the 2017 to 2019 CBC & Netflix television program. This work focuses on *Anne with an E*, the Kevin Sullivan 1984 film, the 1934 George Nicholls Jr. film, and the original novel based on Anne's Bildungsroman characteristics. Through the analysis of how Anne and the narrative interact with concepts of gender, race, class, sexuality, and ability status, emerges how the very definition of what it means to be a 'girl' and how it has changed. All 'Anne' adaptations situate the narratives and morality to the production's period, which speaks to what is historically possible and desirable for a girl within that time. By looking at Anne's mistakes, and her victories comes an understanding of a girl's maturation. In analyzing *Anne with an E*, this research aids in documenting and investigating what we consider normal, moral, and modern, with respect to gender, race, class, and other identity markers, as well as uncovering trends in public perceptions of sociological issues. I argue that Anne's maturation is reliant upon her negotiation with her identity, advocacy, and her community. While there are many aspects of girlhood that have remained since the late 18th century, there has been a fundamental paradigm shift that is explored in this work.

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PREFACE

An immense thank you to all those who aided in the production of this research. I am forever grateful for the time and dedication that helped this project succeed. First and foremost, to my thesis advisor and committee chair Dr. Courtney Weikle-Mills for her help in research practices, content advising, and patience. Additional thanks to Dr. Julie Beaulieu in advising this project in its infancy as a Capstone and Brackenridge Fellowship project. Many thanks to Dr. Geoffrey Glover and Dr. Marah Gubar for their expertise and advising in my defense. A final thanks to all my ‘kindred spirits’ for their support and kindness.

1.0 Introduction

In the summer of 2017, I interned at a local chapter of a national political party. As part of my internship, one evening we volunteered to help run a small, in-party election. In the nature of local politics, most of the attendees were older members of the community. I was sent to the check-in tables and was paired with Shirley Anne, a kind and funny older woman. As we continued to sign in and organize the voters, Shirley Anne met another Shirley Anne. I listened as they both joked and discussed how their mothers named them after *Anne of Green Gables* because they admired and loved her so much. Coincidentally, one of my closest friends had been pestering me to watch the new adaptation. While I never saw either of the Shirley Anne's again, this moment has fascinated me for the past three years. What made Anne Shirley, and by extension *Anne of Green Gables* so special? The care and nostalgia to which these women talked about their mother's connection presented something both intergenerational, and lasting. These women were likely born around the 1940's – nearly 30 years after the novels' original 1908 publication. What has made Anne endure for over a century?

Anne of Green Gables is the story of a young girl, Anne Shirley. Though the elderly Cuthbert siblings Matthew and Marilla were expecting a boy to help on the farm, a mistake lands Anne on Green Gables' doorstep. The imaginative and inspirational Anne explores friendship, love, freedom, and loss growing up in Avonlea. *Anne of Green Gables* is the first book in the Anne series and describes Anne's life from ages eleven to nineteen.

As an international icon, Anne is revered not only by Canadians but throughout the world as a classic figure of childhood, from license plates bearing her face in Prince Edward Island to an *Anne of Green Gables* theme park in Japan. She, and various media about her, exist to teach adolescents about how to come of age as a 'proper' girl because Anne's characterization is the very opposite of 'proper'. She is rebellious, imaginative, clumsy, and whimsical, often forgetting or fumbling her chores and duties. She struggles to be good, often reflecting on this weakness herself. It is in this struggle to be 'good' that the ideal of the proper girl is created. As stated by Drain, "[*Anne of Green Gables*] both conforms to and resists conventions; the resulting tensions, though seen somewhat differently at a distance of nearly a century, actually hold the novel together," (Drain 40). All 'Anne' adaptations take liberties to situate the narratives and morality

to the production's period, which speaks to what is historically possible and desirable for a girl within that time. By looking at Anne's mistakes, and her victories, an understanding of what is considered necessary for a girl to learn to mature can emerge. In analyzing *Anne with an E*, this research aids in documenting and investigating what we consider normal, moral, and modern, with respect to gender, race, class, and other identity markers, as well as uncovering trends in public perceptions of sociological issues.

2.0 Thesis and Methods

In Sardella-Ayres and Reese analysis of the girls' bildungsroman they argue that the “commonalities reveal a dominant idea of what it means to be a girl coming of age in Canada and the United States,” they define this girl as “predominantly white, middle-class, heteronormative, abled, and Protestant,” (Sardella-Ayres and Reese 34) *Anne of Green Gables* follows the traditional literary projection of the Bildungsroman, or coming of age story. Anne Shirley as a bildungsroman, and all of her adaptations, notably complicate some of these markers, signifying the ways in which the identities that intersect with girlhood have and have not changed. *Anne with an E* complicates Anne's “coming of age” through the mitigation of various identity factors, as articulated by Saradella-Ayres and Reese. Through the analysis of how Anne and the narrative interact with concepts of gender, race, class, sexuality, and ability status, we can see how the very definition of what it means to be a ‘girl’ has changed, which allows us in turn to track progress, retrogression, or transformation of identity and societal issues. Based upon this girl, we can see what becomes necessary in her maturation to become a woman. In *Anne with an E*, Anne becomes a woman not in her introduction into heterosexual society, but in negotiation with identity and the social structures that create, support, or disenfranchise the identities of herself and her friends. The show thereby argues that maturation is reliant on community awareness, advocacy, and the formation of individualized identity. Therefore, the modern girl's maturation is not related to domesticity, but rather civics, advocacy, and action.

The methods of my research draw from feminist media studies with support from various discourse analyses. Feminist media studies, much like cultural studies, investigate the sociopolitical implications of texts. I use texts to mean the traditional understanding of the written word but also extending the definition towards television, movies, radio, live theatre as well as newer media such as YouTube and other social media. In relation to my research, this means analyzing the original, and various adaptations of *Anne of Green Gables* with a specific rigorous analysis towards *Anne with an E*. This analysis includes a close reading of scenes and themes within the show. Part of what makes *Anne with an E* so interesting is the immense media

presence the show has garnered due to its large fan base. We can see Anne, with a massive following of contemporary adolescent girls, as an extension of these girl's identification and therefore providing vital insights into girlhood in 2020. My work is aided by significant social media accounts, some of whom initially recognized the sociological trends and meanings I discuss in this work. While I do not interact with these accounts or individuals directly, their public proclamations of connections toward Anne aid in situating my analysis within contemporary girlhood. Furthermore, this research is rooted in the praxis of decolonization. Decolonization is the practice of allyship to indigenous and colonized people, as well as conscious consideration towards how colonialism has shaped historical analysis and empiricism in academia and previous *Anne of Green Gables* scholarship. Particularly helpful in my methods of decolonization were the writings of the Queen's University Centre for Teaching and Learning, a multitude of indigenous writings on girlhood, and the "At The Intersection" blog by April Hathcock. Above all, these writings empathize the need to highlight indigenous, Black, and marginalized voices, in combination with direct action that creates material differences in communities.

In situating my research and analysis, it is necessary to define many of the key terms I will be using throughout this paper. First and most pertinent is defining girlhood. When I use the term girlhood, I am detailing the identity and way of being experienced by those who identify as female or female adjacent during childhood into late adolescence. I reject a bio-essentialist definition of girlhood, and though I will be utilizing binary language for the sake of brevity and clarity, my reading recognizes the various ways in which gender identity is complex, fluid, and changes throughout one's life. I conceptualize gender with respect to Judith Butler's work "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," that see's all gender as part of a performance (Butler). When I use the terms 'doing gender' I am referencing Butler's conceptualization. I specifically define my research as rejecting the assumption that biological sex determines ultimate gender and sexual identity. In order to fully incorporate an anti-racist, and decolonial praxis I acknowledge and actively define girlhood against the colonial institutions of heterosexuality, binary and biological gender, and racist paradigms of what are and are not appropriate manifestations of one's chosen gender identity. This consideration works toward the idea that there is not one monolith girlhood, but many interworking girlhoods. These girlhoods shift and change over time, while still maintain characteristics that unite them under girlhood.

Additionally, I want to acknowledge the many ways in which girlhood, and the study of girlhood, is centered through a white western lens. I do not intend to speak for indigenous, Black, French Acadian, any historically non- 'White' person, or people of color. I acknowledge the varying ways in which girlhood is experienced, expressed, and socially allotted for different groups of people. I touch on this more in corresponding sections regarding race, girlhood, and *Anne with an E*.

Historically, girlhood has meant those who are assigned female at birth. Their 'coming of age' is meant to guide them into marriage, children, and labor of the home (Tarbox). Of course, this has varying degrees in specific historical moments, such as the role of women on the Homefront in WW2, or the outbreak of feminism in the Women's Liberation Movement in the 1960s. However, the gendered division of labor persists, and the history of girlhood allows us to see how gendered maturation can be distinctly traced into girlhood or boyhood. Anne lives in the fictional Prince Edward Island community of Avonlea. Avonlea is based upon a fictional hegemony of a white, protestant, English settlement during the late Victorian period. And as such of this location, both physically and ideologically, there is a clear gendered division of labor. Discussed by many Feminist theories such as Butler, gender is conceptualized as something someone 'has.' And as McQuillan & Pfeiffer discuss specifically in the context of Avonlea, to 'do' gender was no separate from 'having' a specific gender (McQuillan and Pfeiffer). For Anne to be a good child, a good member of the Avonlea community, and grow up to be a good person is to be a 'good' girl. The gender mix-up that is the catalyst for the *Anne of Green Gables* story implies not that girls are equal to boys rather that girls bring something unique to a community, family, and life on virtue of being a girl. We can see this in all adaptations when Anne comes to live with the Cuthbert's. Anne presents no less inherent strength or capability than Jerry or any other hired farmboy, but it is rather that farm work is something that a girl just doesn't do. This of course is complicated with how we conceptualize gender in modernity, as the Butler conceptualization that we perform and do gender has been more accepted. In the late Victorian Avonlea, gender was something someone had, and their gender dictated what activities they participate in. Though I discuss later how gender is 'done' in Anne adaptations, it is important to note that she does embody the traditional 'gender' of a girl in the late Victorian era. She corrects her gendered mistakes and mishaps and ultimately, though it

does take a while, becomes a woman through her marriage to Gilbert and role as a mother to her children.

There is significant outrage from those who are nostalgic for previous versions of Anne that are outraged at the ‘adultification’ of a teenage girl because they believe that Anne is handling topics too adult for adolescents such as sexuality, menstruation, and relevant political issues. However, there is significant evidence to support that the 2020 Anne is perfectly on par with that of the 21st-century girl in terms of psychical, psychological, and societal maturation. In *Seven Going on Seventeen*, the introductory chapter highlights the ways in which society has significantly changed in the 21st century from the 19th and 20th with a lack of the “welfare state, lifelong employment, and collective society, society. Young people have come to know a completely different world, which prioritizes a ‘rationalized economy’ and ‘the entrepreneurial self’ as ideological ‘commonsense.’ ‘Self-possession’ and ‘self-confidence’ have become the panacea for the intense competition that occupies society today,” (Mitchell, and Reid-Walsh 40). The ways in which girls conceptualize and interact with society and political encounters are much more individualized and therefore conscious. In order for Anne to be the protagonist she is, adaptations must consider that the girls that will be viewing Anne view their own girlhood within a larger political and economic context.

A scene when Anne gets her period caused specific outrage, with parents saying that it is too inappropriate and that young girls do not need to see this part in a girl’s life. Here we can note that the specifics of what an ‘innocent girl’ is supposed to see completely presuppose the ethnic identity and location of a girl. White, American, middle-class girl’s might reach the age of their period and have an innocent view of the world. But many girls, including those that watch *Anne with an E*, have lived through a multitude of ‘experiences’ that we would deem ‘inappropriate’, such as experiencing racial violence, food or housing insecurity, and the violence of military occupation, to name a few. Beyond that there is nothing inherently wrong with menstruation or young children seeing the anatomical occurrence, there is evidence to support that girls are getting their periods up to two years earlier than previous generations. “...menstruation is triggered by bodyweight—it starts when a girl is heavy enough (has enough body fat) to support a pregnancy—which is virtually always at 105 lbs or 17% body fat. Eighty years ago [1925], menstruation began at age 16 and [in 2005] because of the substantive increase in the quality of nutrition, it begins on average at age 13,” (Mitchell, and Reid-Walsh 30). With

consideration towards even increased quality of nutrition and the obesity epidemic, 15 years after publication we can infer that the average age of periods is likely dropping further. Therefore, counterclaims by young people themselves that they would need to know about it, are somewhat substantiated. The idea that this is an 'adult' Anne or someone that adolescent girls cannot identify with or learn from is refuted.

3.0 Understanding Past and Present Anne

3.1 Anne of Green Gables – 1908

Who is *Anne with an E*? Even Anne herself distinguishes more than one, “There's such a lot of different Anne's in me. I sometimes think that is why I'm such a troublesome person. If I was just the one Anne it would be ever so much more comfortable, but then it wouldn't be half so interesting,” (Montgomery 164). In some ways, Anne is meant to be imprinted upon – a way for young girls to align, and therefore learn from her. It comes as no wonder, then, that those many Anne's have inspired so many adaptations. The 1908 Anne who I will call the ‘original’ Anne is imaginative, clumsy, and outspoken. She is moderately vain, concerned with herself described “freckles, and the green eyes, and the skinniness,” and says she “Can't be perfectly happy,” because of her red hair that is her “lifelong sorrow,” (Montgomery, 15). Pretty clothes are her “highest ideal of earthly bliss,” (Montgomery, 14). She is rash with a temper but cares immensely for those who she considers her ‘kindred spirits’. Getting into scrapes and messes is her specialty, though within the text she acknowledges that these mishaps represent the various traits she acquires through maturity. In this section, I will discuss major film and television adaptations of *Anne of Green Gables* in order to understand past and present Annes. This is not meant to be a comprehensive list by any means, rather to lay foundational work as to what is considered background knowledge to understanding where many ‘Annes’ have been, and where Anne is today.

3.2 Early 20th Century Anne - 1919 and 1934

There are two Early 20th Century film adaptations, a 1919 silent film adaptation and a 1934 adaptation – both titled ‘*Anne of Green Gables*’. While there are reconstructions of the film, the original 1919 is considered a lost film. Without the original, I was unable to perform my own analysis on the film and largely rely on L.M. Montgomery's review of the movie to guide

my analysis. L.M. Montgomery's essay "Is This My Anne?" provides direct commentary from the author on both the 1919 and 1934 adaptations that present salient insight into what she would have considered a 'correct' or 'true-to-story' adaptation.

L.M. Montgomery, in no stronger words, hated the 1919 adaptation. She "did not like" the actress who played Anne and was "furious" and "enraged" at several adaptive choices ("Is This My Anne?"). Mary Miles Minter, the actress who played 1919 Anne was "too 'sugary sweet' - not a scrap like [Montgomery's] Anne," implying that Anne is, of course, supposed to have red hair and a bit of an edge ("Is This My Anne?"). Whilst the rest of the characters such as Matthew and Marilla were deemed "good" and Gilbert as "passable" ("Is This My Anne?"). Montgomery took issue with many other "absurdities" including Anne branding a shotgun after whipping one of her students. Additional outrage comes from mistakenly locating Queen's college in the United States, further rooting the already established geographical location of Prince Edward Island as central to the 'heart' of Anne, as others have emphasized (Devereux). This seems to critique that Anne was too much of a 'normal' girl in her adaptation, which implies that subverting girlhood in some ways is key to Anne's character. Of course, barring the gun, which I take as a symptom of old Hollywood's necessity for an exciting climax and action to a film.

The 1934 version was met with similar analysis by Montgomery, but nowhere near as much disdain. While Montgomery approved of 'Anne Shirley' (the actress stage name) as Anne, other characters were either unsatisfactory in looks, roles, or in some instances both. Diana in the film is even more of a mirror and foil to Anne than in the original novels, providing momentary commentary on the school, Avonlea, or even once appearing to Anne in a tree so Anne could soliloquy towards the audience. Montgomery calling this Diana a 'washout' is insightful in it allows us to know that Diana's friendship with Anne and role in the story is integral to the novel ("Is This My Anne?"). Even more integral is the introduction of the now commonly popular romance between Anne and Gilbert. Montgomery strikingly disapproved of the romance in the film between Anne and Gilbert, setting a precedent for what and what is not directly important to the message of the story. Montgomery here saying "But I am devoutly thankful that they did not end the story with a lingering kiss between Anne and Gilbert. Had they done so I would have risen up and shrieked," is evidence enough that a romance is decidedly not the main focus of the story ("Is This My Anne?"). Through Montgomery's review, we can learn and focus upon what

Montgomery felt was important to the story, and what should be put in an adaptation to maintain the aesthetic of the story. Furthermore, in specifically looking at a girl Anne, Montgomery's review of other interpretations of Anne allows us a historical baseline of how rebellious or normative, or likely-somewhere in between, Anne is supposed to be.

My own analysis of these films, from a girlhood perspective, does not go far beyond Montgomery's. My only adage that in tracing the Anne's throughout history – this Anne is clearly that of a Hollywood starlet. The romance of Gilbert saving Anne at the Lake of Shining Waters, and immediate reward of a kiss and their subsequent romance (rather than Anne's continued rejection) play towards a highly heterosexual girl plays into the gender panic of the time, and the feminized romantic escapism of depression-era filmmaking. The other large takeaway, in terms of girlhood and gender relations of this movie, is that Anne does not postpone her secondary education. Though Matthew does not die, the doctor that saves his life is brought in by Gilbert, thus concluding the romantic plotline. It is revealed that the Cuthbert sold nearly everything and mortgaged the house to keep Anne in school. This signals that a 'good' 1930's girl will pursue some education, but at the same time reflects the economic struggles of the great depression to which girls must be resilient and resourceful to help their families.

3.3 Kevin Sullivan Anne – 1984

The 80's *Anne of Green Gables* is so beloved that for many it is the classic Anne, even beyond the book adaptation. This made-for-TV movie series was made in 1984 with several subsequent adaptations. In the making of these adaptations, Kevin Sullivan describes the process as “You study the books, you understand the characters, you learn the environment, and then you have to really put them aside and then say okay, I'm going to create a new story here,” and works similarly to *Anne with an E* as in some ways criticism of the original as well as an adaptation (Hersey, 132). Notably in this adaptation are increased romanticism and Anne as a working woman in later adaptations as an author. This career further connects the character of Anne to the life of Montgomery herself and establishes the incorporation of Montgomery's

journal and life into the narrative of Anne. Some of these incorporations are so fundamental, that they transgress the 80's adaptation and work into *Anne with an E*.

Anne, in these adaptations, is romantic and idealistic, as well as snarky and headstrong. Megan Fellows, with dreamy eyes and romantic Candance in her speaking, grows from a doe-eyed child to a strong and assertive woman. So many things about this adaptation are distinctly 80's, the patterns, the fashions, even the hair. This Anne in some ways, makes feminist statements and feminist struggles throughout the films – like partaking in a three-legged race with Diana in *Anne of Green Gables* and her struggle for publication in *Anne: The Continuing Story*. The subsequent film significantly diverges from the original *Anne of Green Gables* novels, including Anne hiding out in a convent in France in World War 1. However, critics throughout these films continuously note that the films “focus on the way in which Anne's innocence is transformed into a mature strength,” (Hersey, 143).

The feminist changes were not without controversy, with some arguing Anne as a traditional woman, and others questioning if the feminist changes were truly feminist at all. “In Who's Got the Power? Montgomery, Sullivan, and the Unsuspecting Viewer”, K.L. Poe questions whether shifting novels on girlhood to ‘empowering’ narratives actually works to ‘empower’ women (Poe 145). She argues that “by taking the characters away from their original stories and placing them in an adaptation that has been anachronistically gerrymandered to fit an agenda that was in no way suggested by the novelist, these films, I argue, may in fact erode the subversive feminism of the text” (Poe 146). The criticism here highlights the ways in which Anne has changed and perhaps needs to stay the same. Critique again comes on the emphasis of Anne and Gilbert's romance, and the lack of Canadian nationalism. What makes Anne special then, beyond her optimism? Though I am hesitant to argue that the 80's version takes feminism ‘too far’ we can see a tension between the rise of 80's professional liberal feminism, which emphasizes autonomy and empowerment through the public workforce sector, and other feminist ideologies which questions whether relationships between women, even within the domestic sphere, are somehow less an ‘empowered’ Anne.

3.4 Walley-Beckett Anne – 2020

The 2020 adaptation of *Anne of Green Gables*, *Anne with an E*, was a long-form television program produced by Netflix and the CBC. The first season was written exclusively by Moira Walley-Beckett and produced by Miranda de Pencier, whereas the second and third season were written by an all-women's writing room with Walley-Beckett as showrunner. Evident by the title *Anne with an E*, rather than *Anne of Green Gables*, the story was not meant to be a direct retelling of the story. Instead, a darker and edgier adaptation that incorporates more realistic troubles that would have been faced by a late 19th-century orphan. Walley-Beckett's production of *Anne with an E* is meant to highlight the "trauma" Anne faced, and social relevancy is put into the fabric of the show

"In this day and age, themes of identity, prejudice, bullying, being an outsider, searching for a way to be accepted and how to belong are entirely topical and super relevant, and those are themes that are built into the story of 'Anne.'" (Ahearn)

Inherent in the construction of the program is the controversy that came along with it. First and foremost, that the series is dark and different than the Kevin Sullivan imagination of Anne from the 80s. Walley-Beckett stated that she had not even watched the beloved Sullivan film (though with Miranda de Pencier a member of the original Sullivan cast as Josie Pye, there is no lack of influence). I want to use this space to highlight why the generational aspect of *Anne of Green Gables* makes analyzing adaptations so fundamental. The website commonsense media is a nonprofit online database that aims to provide a television guide for "a fast-changing world" in order for parents to monitor and potentially restrict media," ("Our Mission: Common Sense Media.") According to their website, they are independent, nonprofit and research-backed organization that is used by policymakers, industry leaders, and global media partners. This site where reviews are given by both parents and teenagers is a rich area for examining expectations and feelings of the former 80s adaptation, and *Anne with an E*.

Of course, in girlhood studies we listen to girl's experiences, it is relevant to listen to parents' experiences as well. Browsing the 'parents' review section, it is apparent that there is a generational aspect towards Anne. The section mostly contains Moms who were considering or had started to, watch *Anne with an E* with their child in an attempt to bond, reminisce, and connect with the story. They were then (mostly) shocked to find that this is a darker reboot of

their 'classic' story, that distinctly has a white, heterosexual, and distinctly peaceful narrative. They are looking for 'their' Anne – the dreamy, romantic, Megan Fellows Anne.

Their Anne of course, does not and is not meant to exist in *Anne with an E* because it is a darker retelling for adolescents facing modern sociopolitical issues. There is no longer the same aspect of an idyllic childhood, and the nature of girlhood has changed since the last 'Anne' was in girlhood. In a response to the parents, the teens' section offers direct argumentation back to the adults, inciting specific social-justice-oriented arguments. One review written by the user 'Bizzabeth' is titled "Don't let all these cranky homophobes deter you!!!" and numerically goes through the counterpoints of the negative adult (assumed mother's) reviews (Bizzabeth). Many of the other adolescent reviews do the same - and argue why kids should be able to see this. In this instance of parental and adolescent debate, we can see from the girls themselves that their own conception of maturation has shifted from marriage toward maturation in engagement with community, social justice initiatives, and identity.

Other forms of parental outrage occurred at the themes of LGBTQ issues, suicide, and sexuality. While of course there is no way to know who the 'real' Anne is beyond Montgomery's writings as I discussed earlier, Walley-Beckett and her team of writers, as I have found out, have done extensive research into Anne scholarship, Montgomery's personal journals, and Anne adjacent writings. I was surprised in my research of Anne myself, to be reading academic texts about Montgomery's life and be reminded of a plotline, character point, or quote that was within the show. These academic writings show up in my analysis below, though I feel it necessary to contend from the beginning that the all-female writing team did base *Anne with an E* historical accuracy and deep Montgomery lore.

Anne Shirley Cuthbert from *Anne with an E*, noting the 'modern' incorporation of Cuthbert, Anne is distinguished from her preceding Anne's in her "accidental feminism" (Ahearn). In the original *Anne of Green Gables*, Anne relay's comments about how "you are paid a salary for teaching, but a husband won't pay you anything, and growls if you ask for a share in the eggs and butter money," (Montgomery, 248). While these tonged and check comments are scattered throughout the novel, Montgomery does not implore an overarching feminist model in the original text. In *Anne with an E*, anything Anne does in the original that represents female individuality, vivacity, and empowerment, 2020 Anne does to the nth degree. Anne has always had a tendency to question, poke and prod the citizens and norms of Avonlea.

Many Montgomery scholars have pinpointed that while the novel highlights questioning of society's norms, Anne does not rebel against these norms themselves. Susan Drain argues that "Anne does not so much do the unusual, as do the usual differently," taking note that while Anne Shirley engages in behavior that is "physically active or even risky, it is not something that she has herself initiated" (Drain, 42). In *Anne with an E*, Anne jumps from different to completely unusual and unique. Anne constantly and consistently rebels against the norms of Avonlea, often attempting to – and succeeding in --changing the norms and beliefs of fellow Avonlea citizens. This significantly departs from Montgomery's intertextual questioning of norms and textual integration of Anne into society. In the later historical moments of the adaptations, Anne can question more and more. The original novel, for instance, Anne questions but does not rebel against, expectations of marriage and careers. In the 80's, she has her own career and participating in the first World War. In the 2020s, Anne works to question the societal constructions of all identity markers that are centered in the classic girls' Bildungsroman such as gender, class, race, sexuality, and ability.

4.0 Gender

4.1 Gender as Division of Labor

While Anne Shirley laments at not being a boy because she is not useful on a farm, Anne Shirley Cuthbert strikingly announces that, “girls can do anything a boy can do, and more!” (“Your Will Shall Decide Your Destiny”, 25:34). Upon Marilla and Matthew’s ‘trial’ for her she is shown participating in (still within the gender/labor distinction of the time) farm tasks. Not only is this a rapid departure from Anne not rebelling – it is also her engaging in initiated and self-actualized behaviors. In “Why Anne Makes us Dizzy: Reading *Anne of Green Gables* from a Gender Perspective,” McQuillan and Pfeiffer acknowledge,

Anne questions some gender rules but does not question others. She never offers to work the farm, nor does she consider many career options other than teacher. She does not oppose marriage on the grounds that it reinforces patriarchy. She does not label rules that use gender for assigning rights, responsibilities, and privileges as "sexism," but we can. (McQuillan & Pfeiffer 25)

In *Anne with an E*, Anne deviates from these gender rules and questions nearly all of the rules of gender presented toward her. She insists and does work on the farm. Anne considers jobs in writing and participates as co-editor of her school newspaper. She opposes marriage, insisting on being ‘the Bride of Adventure’ and though perhaps not on the grounds of patriarchy specifically, consistently opposes aspects of patriarchy as they are presented in the Avonlea community. *Anne with an E* lays into the ‘irony’ and coded anti-patriarchal notions presented in the original text – presenting these comments as fully-fledged plot points within the show (McQuillan and Pfeiffer).

4.2 Diana and Female Friendship

Diana is Anne’s best friend in all adaptations of *Anne of Green Gables*. Beyond a ‘kindred spirit,’ Anne gives the signification of ‘bosom friend’ to her “dearest Diana”

(Montgomery, 261). Diana, in original form, is the foil to Anne – where Anne is wild, Diana is strict and ‘proper’. The Berry’s as a whole simulate Anne’s integration into the Avonlea society. They are not overly critical of Anne at first, much like Mrs. Lynde who represents strict propriety. Though when Anne falters they are nowhere near as forgiving as the Cuthbert’s themselves. Diana and Anne rest at the mitigation of societal norms and expectations. Anne allows Diana to be free and enjoy the childhood that was often being squandered under Edwardian Protestantism and she exists as part of Montgomery’s larger critiques about society. Diana defends Anne from a class perspective, when other citizens of Avonlea are wary against an orphan. Diana, as Anne’s foil, points out when Anne is being silly or outrageous, highlighting both the ways Anne is a unique girl, yet teaching her and therefore the reader how to behave as a proper girl.

Anne with an E, arguably, has perhaps the most radical reimagining of Diana in all Anne adaptations. Diana’s character expansion from simply Anne’s foil to an independent character reflects further critique of historicized girlhood, and, much like Gilbert’s character, her role in Anne and her own story reflect changing societal roles. Though I discuss further in sections about gender and sexuality, Diana and Anne’s relationship is arguably the most central to *Anne of Green Gables* besides that of Anne and the Cuthbert’s themselves. Anne and Diana do everything together, and when they fight it stops the narrative. Anne and Diana’s fight in 3.07 is a more dramatic ‘breakup’ scene than any explicitly romantic scene in the series. The girl’s powerful emotions for each other contribute to the intense nature of female friendship and girlhood.

On a wider note, female friendship is pertinent throughout the entire series. The Avonlea school girls, Anne, Diana, Ruby Gillis, Tilly Boulter, Jane Andrews, and Josie Pye gossip and socialize in ways that are distinct to girlhood. They discuss the ways their period effects them, their views on sexuality and kissing, and create hierarchies that shift and change throughout the series. These socializations speak towards the sustaining aspects of girlhood, as these schoolhouse peer pressures, and discussions persist from the original *Anne of Green Gables* till today.

One of the most explementary and poignant moments of girlhood expression in the show is in 3.05. After finding out her roots in Scotland, Anne invites the girls to do a ‘Beltane’ ritual. Beltane is the Celtic goddess of sexuality, fertility and rebirth (“Religions - Paganism:

Beltane.”). While in a midnight ceremony the girl’s gather around the fire and express their individual expression of their gender that reflects the many facets of girlhood that they represent. First Anne starts by calling upon Beltane, “Goddess of Beltane sacred Mother Queen of May, wild lady of the woods, guardian of love and life... Welcome to our circle. Together they chant, “We women powerful and sacred declare upon this hallowed night,” and then begin their own individual declarations. Tillie declares, “Our heavenly bodies belong solely to us,”, and Diana, “We shall choose whom to love, and with whom to share trust,”. Then Josie, “We shall walk upon this earth with grace and respect,”, Jane “We’ll always take pride in our great intellect,” and Ruby “Well honor our emotions so our spirits may soar,”. Then all together, “may any man belittle us, we’ll show him the door!” The episode ends with Ruby overcome with emotion, staring at the moon and joyously crying, ‘Oh how I love being a woman,’ as the girl’s widely scream in agreement. This is a construction of girlhood in a liberated sense as not a burden but an expression of joy and freedom.

4.3 Sexuality & Marriage

As I’ve discussed previously, some major topics discussed in *Anne with an E* are related to sexuality and marriage. In historical definitions of girlhood, marriage and sexuality as a part of maturation have been nearly explicit. Whereas there have been, as I have discussed, deviations from individual expressions of heterosexuality, maturation was working towards a heterosexual marriage. Labor was divided on gender lines, and therefore in order to become a full member of a functional society, a heterosexual marriage was needed to complete the dyad. In *Anne with an E*, these notions of marriage and sexuality are complicated. First, as I have discussed, there is more of a negotiation with the LGBTQ community. As well as this, there is an overall liberal feminist approach to marriage and sexuality, that frame marriage as supposed to be a choice. Furthermore, this choice of who to marry is not based on labor or class relations, but rather on romantic love. This narrative fits the notion of the 2020 romantic idea of marriage, where even the legal ramifications of marriage work to normalize relationships and contribute to society in a social sense, rather than economic. There is also a heavy slant towards marrying for love, rather than economic gains. In fact, women in 2020 who marry for economic gains are considered

hustlers and gold-diggers, while in the Victorian era this was a common and active goal of marriage. In relation to girlhood, this means that girls' maturation is not reliant on heterosexual marriage, but rather on the expression and negotiation of sexuality and individual agency. *Anne with an E*, in the aspect of love and marriage, takes a liberal feminist approach, advocating that whether or not someone gets married, should be an individual girl's choice – and that this marriage does not define their existence.

This individual agency is expressed in *Anne with an E* in a few ways. First, as I have discussed is the plotline of Prissy's intended marriage to Mr. Philips. While in the original novel's and previous 80's adaptation, Prissy and Mr. Philips have a tearful goodbye that ends their potential romance together, in *Anne with an E* there is a wedding planned, discussed, and nearly completed. Prissy's marriage allows the girls to discuss their own thoughts on marriage and position themselves within or against the context of future assumed heterosexuality. Mr. Philip's character, whose sexuality has been revealed to be a closeted gay man, is commentary on the ways traditional heterosexuality can be a bind for both the man and the woman. At the altar, after seconding guessing her marriage, the young Prissy Andrews runs from the alter with the Avonlea girls following after her. After tripping and falling, the girl's catch up to Prissy and though there is concern for her, they immediately begin to play in the snow. Prissy running from the alter signifies an escape from the confines of heterosexuality, indicating that this is not the path a girl should take and that she has other options for her life. The juxtaposition of the wedding and the girl's playing in the snow offer the argument that an adolescent girl should not be involved in marriage and homemaking, but rather freedom and the fullness of life. The next time Prissy is shown is in season 3, after returning from higher education at Queens. This suggests in the narrative the importance of education over marriage.

This dichotomy of marriage and education is another major aspect of *Anne with an E*. First in season 1, in which Anne after hitting Gilbert with her slate, the Cuthbert's seek counseling with the minister. The minister proposes then that instead of going to school Anne should be trained to be a wife. Though Marilla disagrees, as does Anne eventually, Anne learns that life without education is dreadful. Here, the narrative takes the position that a girl's education is more important than homemaking. While it does not explicitly make the argument that education is more important than homemaking, it emphasizes the choice between the two

and the importance of education with Anne's decision to return back to school. Here, Anne's first notion of becoming the 'Bride of Adventure' is introduced.

The 'Bride of Adventure' is a motif within the show that Anne continuously brings up. In the original *Anne of Green Gables*, there is still a resistance and commentary on heterosexual marriage. Anne eventually does marry Gilbert, though their marriage is delayed until the 5th book and Anne's 25th birthday. In *Anne with an E*, the narrative pushes a feminist ideal that pushes back completely against expectations of marriage. Anne saying, "I've always wanted to be a bride, but I don't really expect to be a wife," implies not only that there are inherently gendered expectations of marriage, but that she intends to challenge these notions and expectations ("Remorse Is the Poison of Life", 22:17). As a result, challenging the historical conception of girlhood toward defining new girlhood within Anne that does not rely on marriage. Additionally, the love triangle dichotomy of Winifred, Gilbert, and Anne presents the parallels of the 'proper' matured adolescent and the 'wild' adolescent girl. Winifred is supposed to be what is desirable, but instead, the wild, imaginative, and rebellious Anne is the one Gilbert loves in the end. This signifies that even in romantic relationships the negotiation with societal norms and expectations is expected and commended

Season 3 makes themes of marriage and sexuality a primary concern. Relating toward themes of marriage, both Diana and Winifred exemplify those who are positioned to marry, and the various implications marriage had, and can still have, for women. After Gilbert ends the courtship, Winifred talks about how she will be ruined and actually flees to Paris to escape social persecution. This, within the narrative of the show, signifies how marriage was related to social status, moreover than love or personal romance. Diana has a similar, albeit different dilemma. While Diana wishes to go to Queens and receive an education, her parents are set on sending her to finishing school. Her parents won't even allow her to take the entrance exam. Though Aunt Josephine convinces Diana to secretly take the exam, and Diana passes and is accepted into Queens. This culminates into a massive argument in which Diana's independence and agency is immediately suppressed and rejected.

She yells, "Why is it that what I am and what I want doesn't matter," ("The Better Feeling of My Heart", 7:24). To which her father angrily yells while towering over her, "You have one job. One task in life and you will do it. You will be finished! And then you can negotiate with your husband for whatever you damn well want," ("The Better Feeling of My

Heart”, 7:48). Diana is then shown frozen, crying, and saying, “[She] doesn’t matter,” (“The Better Feeling of My Heart”, 14:29). This is eventually resolved with Marilla discussing Queen’s and convincing Diana’s parents to let her attend Queens. This first exists toward highlighting the importance of a girl’s education, as not everyone who is watching Anne, presumably would have access to equal education. So, this works toward a narrative of securing education for all girls. Additionally, I want to highlight that Diana’s traditional character projection – running around in Avonlea with Anne and then immediately getting married and having babies, would simply not be a satisfying narrative in 2020. Why wouldn’t Diana get to have an education, why is she relegated to the home? This, for a Diana that has agency and a character of her own, would be an oppressive and depressing ending for her character. As a part of 2020 girlhood, the discovery of identity and negotiation with social justice and community does not necessitate a formal education, but it certainly incorporates the introduction of knowledge. Integral to the plot of season 3 is Diana’s fate of finishing school. Whilst the rest of the teens in Avonlea’s school prepare for the Queens exams, Diana is sent home as in lieu of her education she will be sent to Paris to be ‘finished’ into a proper wife. While this allows for the plot to introduce an Anne and Jerry romance (as discussed later) it also allows for Montgomery’s critique of ‘traditional’ life to be highlighted. Though it is noted that L.M. Montgomery was no outward feminist – and believed in traditional gender roles – this does not mean that it was without critique. Montgomery dreaded her own marriage and lamented about the many marriages of her female companions (Robinson, “Sex Matters” 174). As Anne values education and Diana is continued to be denied it, the narrative can allow for exploration of the value of education for modern girls.

In addition to marriage, there is the highlighted aspect of gender in relation to sexuality in *Anne with an E*. LM Montgomery, as discussed, was no stranger to sexuality, and with the emergence of an ever-increasing sexual revolution occurring in Western Culture, it is no wonder that *Anne with an E* deals with topics of sexuality, specifically from a feminist angle. In relation to girlhood, girls have had increasing sexual agency as well as the ability to be sexual. Evolving publications like Seventeen Magazine, independent blogs, among other media for tweens and teens, beings to explore sexuality at earlier ages. There is significant evidence that in some ways this is not unprecedented. Tweens are maturing at rapid ages in relation to sexuality, and even entering puberty earlier. Sexuality is an essential part of identity, in terms of orientation, as well

as expressions of said sexual agency. *Anne with an E* touches upon this broader topic through several discussions as I will discuss below.

First, in Season 1 there was the highly controversial moment in which Anne first gets her period. Occurring at the beginning of the episode, Anne wakes up in a frenzy and thinks she is dying because her sheets are covered in blood. She is quickly comforted by Marilla and spends the rest of the episode comically being dramatic and miserable the whole episode – but glad about her newfound ‘womanhood’. This scene acts in two aspects. First, it works toward a feminist aspect of a new girlhood by making the radical decision to not only talk about Anne’s menstrual cycle but to also show the blood. This is distinct, as period blood on television has been historically taboo, considering that the first menstrual commercial showing red dye occurred only 3 years ago (Ziv). Though this has obviously occurred for all girls that are assigned female at birth sometime in their puberty, this scene represents a newfound negotiation with normalizing puberty and sexual education.

In season 3, there is conversation surrounding the emergence of sexuality as a whole, and as a result sexual education. In terms of sexual agency, the Avonlea school kids begin to seriously engage with romantic endeavors. In a constructive aspect, these lead to conversations surrounding kissing and sexual relations that can be found empowering and helpful toward modern girls. During a scene in which the girls dance with the boys for the upcoming fair, the girls all freak out because Ruby tells them that ‘touching’ is what gets you pregnant. With no sexual education of their own, Miss Stacy ¹informs them that it is not in fact touching that gets someone pregnant. While she obviously does not go into depth about conception, when asked about ‘the steps’ by the girls, she highlights marriage and consent as a relevant aspect of sexual relations. Throughout the season there are other moments in which motherhood, sexuality, and ‘the steps’ towards conception and intercourse are fraught with curiosity by the Avonlea school teens. Charlie, in attempting to romance Anne on a walk home lets her know that because she thinks so much and is very emotional, it might damage her ability to have children in the future, as “an overly active mind causes women to be barren,” (“I Am Fearless and Therefore Powerful”, 30:55) Anne, of course, freaks out, and the girls have further conversations surrounding sexuality and continue to discuss their fears and hopes. This leads to a comical scene

¹ Though the original novel and *Anne with an E* use the spelling ‘Miss Stacy’; the Kevin Sullivan adaptation uses ‘Miss Stacey’

in which the girls' force Anne to ask Gilbert if what Charlie said is true since he is studying medicine. While these of course provide funny and embarrassing and relatable moments in coming of age and learning about sex, this highlights a changing girlhood in which consent and choice are relevant aspects of sexual intercourse, as well as highlighting the dangers of a lack of sexual education. This education from the girls leads toward Diana complicating her relationship between Jerry on the basis that she does not feel romantic attraction to him, recognizing that kissing is an aspect of sexual attraction and agency. While Anne does engage in a few 'romantic' kisses with Gilbert in the season finale, her sexual agency and discussion on such comes from a much darker, and resistance aspect.

While *Anne with an E* has quite of a few random pairings, one not too out of left field is that of Billy Andrews and Josie Pye. Their potential relationship had been hinted at and discussed throughout the season, with Josie bragging about the economic and societal advancements of the potential pairing, indicating historical representations of marriage and sexuality. After the dance at the fair, Billy takes Josie out behind the barn to kiss. In this scene, Billy assaults Josie after she repeatedly tells him to stop. Continuing to kiss her and touch her breasts. After Josie pushes him off, and they both end up returning to the barn, Billy's version of the events quickly starts spreading around the Avonlea community – to which the girls, particularly Anne know that something is wrong. Anne asks if Billy did something to her, to which Josie Pye runs from. Anne confronts Billy at the fair, which results in less than desirable outcomes as he just brushes her off. Anne still enraged about the event in the dead of night sneaks off to the school to write what can only be described as a 'feminist manifesto' in response to the sexual assault, and the town's subsequent response. The entire paper is not released in the show, but we get quotes and readings from the manifesto as follows.

I highlight this case because it occurred yesterday in our very own community, but truly it is just one of the countless such incidents that are perpetrated against women everyday, in every part of the world for centuries. The utter disrespect of WOMEN'S BODILY AUTONOMY is a symbolic issue – on that enslaves an entire sex- and therefore is surely worth our time and attention...same chance to live bold lives. When boys are daring, they are heralded as heroes. When girls do the same, we are foolish, reckless, culpable. What would it cost us if we were all allowed to take heroic chances? Without these STUPID ARCHIAIC RULES, think about what a revolutionary world we'd live in! We are told that a women's place is in the ... what if we refuse to accept that?... So it is time [to take] a stand. Men must decide if...join us in REBELLION, as ...fight for justice and equality... Women are not made whole by men. Women are made whole the moment they enter the world,"

This perhaps begins one of the most quintessential aspects of my argument. This manifesto and feminist response to sexual assault distinctly comes from a negotiation with the MeToo movement in which women, primarily on social media, speak out and expose sexual abusers in their communities. A 2020 girl is aware of and has likely participated or discussed this social movement. Additionally, Anne's distribution of the manifesto throughout Avonlea by use of the printing press is perhaps a dialogue on modern girls' use of social media and the censorship of such media.

The manifesto has results that are less than desirable, which is a common formula in *Anne of Green Gables* works. Anne, in her passion, does good deeds, the wrong way. The manifesto first of all exposes what Josie would want to keep private. Josie and Anne eventually work to come to an armistice after Josie slaps Anne for exposing her business, but this works as a critique on the MeToo movement just as it works toward teaching girls how to react to such events by using Anne as a character. When something happens to you or a friend, you will have a community of support, and those who doubt or don't believe you – like how some of the girls (like Jane, Billy's sister) did not believe or side with Josie. However, it is important that it be the individual's choice and their business to discuss matters of sexual assault. *Anne with an E* affirms the autonomy of women, and that it was not Josie's fault, and that the event is not taken lightly. However, the show does present realistic issues of trauma that result after a sexual assault. Josie's parents are less concerned about the traumatic event that occurred to their daughter, and more concerned with their standing in the community. Her mother even tells her that, "You put yourself in a situation, that was a choice. Now you have a reputation. And girls with reputations do not have choices," and completely rejects the trauma and hurt that the assault caused her daughter ("A Strong Effort of the Spirit of Good", 5:52). Though Josie and Anne never become friends, we have one of the select moments where the narrative deviates from the main set of characters. After Billy throws rocks at Josie's window asking for forgiveness, forgiveness which she does not give nor is Billy entitled to, Josie lets down her hair from the rollers. This is symbolic as it shows even Josie, Anne's bully is burdened by the expectations of her gender and is deeply impacted and somewhat radicalized by the assault. Josie unraveling of her hair, previously established as an immense marker of beauty and status for Josie, is a rejection of norms of sexuality and previous generations' responses to sexual assault. Additionally, Anne has her own story of negotiations with sexual assault. As the girls discuss in

season 1, a very much less mature discussion surrounding kissing, Anne describes Mr. Hammond as having a mouse in his pocket. Though Anne does not use such language in talking with the Avonlea schoolgirls – it is clear to the viewer that Anne was frequently overhearing Mrs. Hammond being raped by Mr. Hammond. Though this relates to trauma and PTSD overall, *Anne with an E* negotiates various ways in which girls could be introduced to sexuality. The narrative again, affirms that nothing Anne did is wrong, and she is in fact in this position, a victim, it again works to counteract harmful societal narratives that have oppressed girls for a long time. Some statistics show as many as 1 in 4 girls will be sexually assaulted, with evidence of even higher when focusing on specific vulnerable populations, such as indigenous people (Finkelhor and Hotaling; Staff, Gareth et al.). Though activists work toward reducing this harm, it is a fundamental aspect of girlhood as many girls have been or know of someone who has been assaulted.

4.4 Avonlea as Feminine Utopia

The ‘Feminist Utopia Fiction’ genre has existed in literature since the early 15th century with *The Book of the City of Ladies* by Christine de Pizan and continues today with *Themyscira*, the home of Wonder Woman (Drapeaud). Avonlea has been deemed as a potential feminine utopia due to Montgomery’s matriarchal construction of the town. In *Anne of Green Gables* all town happenings, gossiping, and plot advancement happens in the guise of the women of Avonlea (McQuillian and Pfeiffer). They are the heads of their households, with the men of Avonlea even being described as the ‘husbands of [female character] such as Thomas Lynde “whom the Avonlea people called ‘Rachel Lynde’s husband,’” (Montgomery, 2). Perhaps the greatest example of this utopia is that of Mrs. Rachel Lynde. The first character introduced in the novel, and many adaptations, Rachel Lynde provides a pivotal role as the ‘voice’ of Avonlea. In *Anne with an E* Rachel is transformed throughout the narrative. Using ‘incorrect’ language such as ‘Indians’ to describe indigenous Canadians and what could be described as a racist or sexist attitude, Anne constantly works to change Rachel’s and by extension Avonlea’s mind about various social issues present in Avonlea.

In a relation to girlhood, the matriarchal aspects of Anne allow for increased agency and inspiration, and by some extension, hope. The powerful positions of Avonlea present new ideals of power for women within their communities. The traditional liberal understanding of power results in women's agency in the workforce. However, Anne presents several ways in which girls could grow up to be functioning contributing members of their society. Miss Stacy interacts with the community with a career as a successful teacher, signifying women in the workforce. Even Winifred – introduced as the upper-class socialite, is introduced to Gilbert while she is working as a secretary at the doctor's office. These provide inspiration for girls within the ability to participate in the community through labor. Additionally, there are many opportunities for grassroots activism – such as Marilla being introduced to 'feminism' at the society for progressive mothers (Though she's eventually kicked out of the group due to Anne's presumed misbehavior). Additionally, Rachel as a fundamental matriarch of Avonlea works to assert herself in her role on the Board of Educators. After she is misogynistically treated and silence by the male board members, Rachel and the women of Avonlea work with the Avonlea school kids in their protest against censorship as well as securing three additional female members of the Avonlea school board – including Marilla! All of these examples work towards an example of female agency outside of the domestic home sphere that present role models for maturing girls.

4.5 Playing Girlhood

One interesting aspect of girlhood that unites the generations is the ways in which the Avonlea school girls interact with one another. Talking about their periods, kissing, and behavior with one another, the Avonlea school girls work towards in some ways asserting and defining girlhood, as well as challenging traditional understandings of girlhood. They frequently talk during lunch, giggling about boys, their periods, kissing games, and their knowledge of sexuality. Different girls represent variations on the historical definitions of girlhood, with consideration towards class markers. Josie is a very conservative girl, and until her sexual assault in season 3, she continuously upholds traditional values of girlhood, constantly making fun of Anne for her odd ways. Anne, of course, challenges the norms and represents the changing and alternative modes of girlhood. Pushing against heterosexuality by kissing Cole on the cheek

during their kissing games, and overall openly dissenting against the girl's ideas of marriage, Anne represents new, radical definitions of girlhood. Anne even also dresses up as a boy, experimenting with her gender. Though she does state that while it was fun she enjoys being a girl. While there is perhaps a queer analysis to be made here, in terms of girlhood I understand this to be expressing experimentation with gender, while still presuming Anne as a figure of a 'girl' while providing commentary that the category of 'girl' and 'boy' is beyond a fixed categorization of gender.

Gender presentation is frequently brought up in *Anne of Green Gables* and works toward a key girlhood discourse. Anne's beauty, or her perceived lack thereof, is one of the most memorable traits Anne has. Even in the 'depths of despair' as Anne would say, she makes self-deprecating comments about her looks. The preoccupation with beauty above other traits is a contested marker of girlhood. While many feminist and general women's self-worth campaigns emphasize self-love and acceptance, with the global beauty industry valued at 532 Billion (Biron). *Anne with an E* realistically portrays girlhood in that Anne is preoccupied with her appearance, she wants to be the object of beauty and loves beautiful things.

One of the most rememberable moments in *Anne of Green Gables* is when Anne, lamenting about her 'red as carrots' hair, attempts to dye it into a raven black. When this goes disastrously, she then attempts to bleach it back out with laundry washing – leaving her hair a bright green. Hair has been a subject of girlhood studies for many years and has a significant impact on a girl's identity. Tales of girl's hair insecurity riddle young adult literature, with Anne Shirley and Jo Marsh (*Little Women*) having disastrous, short hair cuts in the Victorian era in which long hair was in fashion and fetishized (McMaster 63). This continues today with heroines like Hermione Granger (*Harry Potter*) and Annabeth Chase (*Percy Jackson and the Olympians*) having insecurities due to their uncontrollable curly hair when straight hair was in fashion in the early 2000s. The cutting of hair has even been linked to a representation of a loss of one's identity, which can be positive in the rebirth of identity when cut with autonomy and intent, and can symbolize rape and the loss of autonomy when done against one's will (McMaster). The dyeing and cutting of Anne's hair represents the ways in which girlhood has endured despite radical changes in its definition. Anecdotally, a 'bad haircut' is arguably a marker of girlhood itself. A story about cutting one's own bangs, trimming their hair, or an awful dye job is a tale relayed experienced by almost every girl I've ever known. Hair for a girl is beyond fashion. It is

a negotiation with social cues, morality, and control of one's autonomy. The continuous struggle for a girl to position herself within society is symbolized through their hair. Cutting, coloring, straightening, or wigs and extensions all are means of expression for girls to see how they fit into society.

Despite the enduring of the haircut, there are several other gender presentation points made in *Anne with an E*. One of the most significant is the use of Miss Stacy as challenging the norms of gender presentation in Avonlea. Miss Stacy is first introduced riding a gas motorbike – symbolizing her modern ideas in comparison to the horse and carriage travelers of Avonlea. She is also seen wearing pants, and no corset. From a historical standpoint, this is complicated – as in the time period of *Anne of Green Gables* (and *Anne with an E*) corsets were not an oppressive force, rather used mostly for back support. However, using the symbolic nature of the corset as an oppressive force, and Miss Stacy's rejection of these gender norms, it encapsulates a feminist rejection of oppressive beauty standards. Though Miss Stacy is an adult, the negotiation with gender expectations and therefore identity presents alternatives for girls and by extension complicates girlhood past rigid gender barriers.

4.6 Masculinity

One of the ways in which we can learn about girlhood is through studying boyhood. Though Anne works against heterosexism, the main romance of *Anne of Green Gables* is that of Anne and Gilbert. Despite keeping a few of his key character traits, in various adaptations Gilbert takes the form of whatever is the 'romantic ideal' of the time. In 1930 this is an academic, teasing, Americana Gilbert. Though the narrative seriously deviates from that original plot of *Anne of Green Gables* into a Romeo and Juliet type romance, Gilbert's question of 'I want you to be my girl,' incites a traditional and stereotypical 1930 teen boy. In the Kevin Sullivan movie, notorious for upping the romance between Anne and Gilbert, the romance implores a will they won't they dichotomy that eventually carries over to *Anne with an E*. 80's Gilbert is a Christian Slater type, not saying much but constantly making eyes at Anne. He teases

her, even more so than is traditionally put in the text. This adaptation establishes affirming that Anne and Gilbert are academic equals, highlighting that they both tie at Queens and are all other rivals.

In *Anne with an E*, remnants of 2020 Gilbert are seen, though there are distinct differences that work toward establishing girlhood, by establishing the ‘ideal’ romantic interest. Of course, there is the iconic slate scene, in which after Gilbert pulls Anne’s hair, she breaks a slate over his head. In *Anne with an E*, this scene is given presupposition to the violence of pulling Anne’s hair. In 2020, after MeToo and the culmination of other feminist projects while there is still unwarranted touches these violations are taken much more seriously by the community. A feminist project like *Anne with an E* must introduce reason or a preestablished, forgivable, motive for Gilbert pulling on Anne’s hair. Hair that is established as part of her core identity. *Anne with an E* gives this motive as the schoolgirls refusing to allow Anne to talk to Gilbert due to Ruby having ‘dibs’ on him. This leaves Gilbert not knowing Anne’s name – with building frustration as he continues to ask and is ignored. Eventually, this has him go to Anne’s desk, give her an Apple and ask what her name is. When she ignores him this time, he pulls her hair, and calls her Carrots, leading to the breaking of the slate. Additionally, important, *Anne with an E* deviates from the traditional over the head break to a backhand with the slate. This feminized attack insinuates power even in feminized modes of violence.

Beyond the slate, there are other examples of *Anne with an E* putting the ‘romantic ideal’ upon a for all intents and purposes ‘feminist’ boy. With the introduction of baby Delphine, Gilbert’s adopted niece, Gilbert is constantly seen cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the baby. The male ideal here is an equal in all aspects. Visually, this is true as well Gilbert is always seen next to Anne, never behind or in front of. This is especially true in season three, as his actions equate to this visual placement. During the fallout of Anne’s feminist manifesto, Gilbert defends her to the class, and even stands next to her as she leads the student protest against censorship. Billy, a character who represents toxic masculinity, constantly bullies Anne. Billy gets beat up several times, by Gilbert in defense of Anne and Cole in defense against homophobia. Importantly, Gilbert beating up Billy in defense of Anne is not to protect or assert dominance over here, in fact she is never even told about the event. This represents the positive framing of these boyhoods and the negative framing of negative masculinities.

5.0 Race

In *Anne with an E* Anne and the traditional residents of Avonlea remain white. While there have been some fan-projects such as “Project Green Gables” on YouTube that feature a Black Anne Shirley, all of the feature productions of *Anne of Green Gables* feature a White Anne. This is important as whiteness is key to the construction of girlhood. In *Racial Innocence* by Robin Bernstein, Bernstein discusses how the white/Black dichotomy is key to the construction of childhood and girlhood. White supremacy has made white girlhood the predominant girlhood, which introduces a complication and necessitates a conversation to how Anne, as a white girl, can work with her community towards a socially aware maturation that is cognizant of racial injustice and how girlhoods are constructed differently for girls of color.

Important to note that having red hair does not negate her whiteness but does complicate the way she is treated within Avonlea on basis of genetic looks. Red hair in the Victorian era was often associated with the Devil and Judas, which in no doubt provides Anne with increased skepticism and critique based on her penchant for getting into trouble. Anne’s “hot temper is another attribute linked to her red hair” (62, McMaster). Anne’s societal transgressions are forgiven and perhaps given extra forgiveness due to white privilege.

5.1 Race on Prince Edward Island

Many period adaptations and media reassert white-centric ideas about historical periods. Of course, there are many diverse cultures within Canada and Prince Edward Island. One of these historically erased communities is that of the Black community on Prince Edward Island, specifically in an area of Charlottetown called ‘The Bog.’ In *Anne with an E* Bash’s and Mary introduce The Bog into a significant place of commerce, diversity, and cultural activity on PEI. While the neighborhood is understood to the citizens of Avonlea and introduced in the narrative as a ‘slum,’ we quickly learn the impact of de facto segregation and the community that the bog

cultivates. The Bog has a complicated and long-ignored history. During the late 19th century, as Anne would have experienced the Bog, it was inhabited by the descendants of freed slaves, immigrants, and poor White and Black people (MacEachern). The community at one point hit a peak of 200 residents during the 1800s, though the neighborhood eventually faded away due to interracial marriage and emigration (MacEachern). The Bog is important to the history and culture of the island in the shows time period. Additionally, it allows for a decolonial and inclusionary historical narrative, that highlights both the settler effect of the white people of Avonlea, while also highlighting independent Black communities.

5.2 Bash and the Lacroix's

Bash is introduced to *Anne with an E* when Gilbert works on a steamship to fulfill his father's dying wish of having him travel and see more of the world. In Moira's master plan for the show, she always planned on diversifying the narrative in both a historically accurate and inclusive method (David). Season 2's introduction of Bash allows for many conversations about race to be entwined into the narrative, focusing both on historical misconceptions about the time period, and modern conversations regarding race. Looking toward historical misconceptions,

Anti-racist paradigms of discussing race are also implemented through Gilbert and Bash's relationship. Notable here is that this is introduced through Gilbert and not Anne. Anne is rooted in Prince Edward Island and the fictional geography of Avonlea. And within the fictional geography of Avonlea is the presumed Whiteness of Avonlea. As I discussed, whiteness is unfortunately central to *Anne of Green Gables*. Though the narrative introduces people of color, it is exemplified by the roundabout introduction of Bash with Gilbert that there must be significant explanation for 'why' a person of color would be included within the narrative. While on the steamship Gilbert and Bash form a brotherly bond, and this bond is strengthened and continued despite Gilbert making various racial 'mistakes' in conversations with Bash throughout the series. When visiting Trinidad, Gilbert is surprised that Hazel Bash's mother is still caring for the white children to the family in which she was previously enslaved – as "I thought slavery ended here over 50 years ago?" ("Signs are Small Measurable Things, but

Interpretations are Illimitable”², 16:45) Bash replies that Gilbert is wrong and that there are lasting de facto effects from slavery and colonization beyond that of the laws “My family never left that plantation. Not Granny, Not Mom. She raised them children, I hardly know her,” (“Signs are Small Measurable Things, but Interpretations are Illimitable”², 17:00) When Bash wants to go to The Bog to receive medical treatment Gilbert talks about how he doesn’t want to go there because the Bog is a slum. Bash replies that it is for people ‘like him’ because of the racial implications of the Bog, and how Gilbert has an unconscious bias regarding the Bog, which is primarily Black is “sad and unlawful, and full of poverty and –“ Bash: “People who resemble me,” (“Struggling Against the Perception of Facts”⁸, 10:33) When Hazel moves to Avonlea after the death of Mary, to take care of Bash and Mary’s child Delphine, the racial tensions are further leaned into. Where conversations regarding Hazel’s uptaking of the mammy stereotype, discomfort and distrust of Gilbert, and revelation of Bash’s father being a victim of a violent lynching all occur. Not only do these conversations diversify the narrative of *Anne of Green Gables*, but they also correlate with modern conversations regarding race. The show uptakes anti-racist rhetoric, not leaning into white fragility, white saviorism, or white guilt. When Gilbert messes up, the narrative continues on. Though he doesn’t defend his actions, he also doesn’t weep in apologetics every time. When Hazel calls him Mr. Blythe, he corrects her but leaves conversations regarding race to be primarily had by the Black residents of Avonlea.

However, it is important to note that *Anne with an E* is not without its complications regarding race. Mary, Bash’s wife, dies in the third episode of season 3 having only a 6 episode run in which she is present but is still talked about and ‘used’ by the show and the plot to provide emotional heartstrings toward the audience. Her death is used to garner support for racial equality in Avonlea. The death of a Black woman is not lost on me, and I want to be critical of the way that Mary is represented. As a woman, and therefore a culmination of girlhood, the narrative provides a narrative that is indicative of misogynoir – the intersection of misogyny and racism experienced by Black women. Mary’s life is riddled with strife and trouble. She works long hours as a launderer and had a complicated relationship with her son Elijah whom she had young and out of wedlock. As soon as she gets her ‘happy ending’ – moves to the Blythe-Lacroix homestead with Bash, has her daughter Delphine, and her son Elijah returns home to see her things go south quickly. Her son Elijah steals from Gilbert in a bizarre race-revenge plot that seems counterintuitive given the narratives work toward establishing anti-racist paradigms. Then,

Mary dies leaving her daughter Delphine motherless. Racism is a constant topic of conversation during her death and at the party that they throw her on Easter while she passes. They are concerned about finding a doctor that will look at her sepsis injury, Minnie-May (innocently and positively) comments that Delphine ‘looks like chocolate’, and Anne has to beg the Barrys to allow the use of their garden for the party due to their racism regarding Mary. What does it mean that the show cannot really imagine Black women as successful and happy adult women? I believe it is both a failure of the show, as well as a symptom of issues that permeate society and, therefore girlhood. *Anne of Green Gables* is a story of hope and home, the fact that one of the only Black women on the show have neither hope nor home is seriously concerning.

Connecting to girlhood specifically, the narrative is attempting to make a direct correlation between Anne, and Mary’s young daughter Delphine. Anne’s parents died when she was an infant, and season 3 incorporates her search for identity and specifically her Mother. Mary’s death is supposed to create a parallel and cyclical nature to the ties between grief, parental love, and birth. However, as Robinson articulates in *Racial Innocence*, “historically located representations of children, have unique abilities to recapitulate adult culture,” (Robinson, 7). We can see that girlhood is distinctly different for white girls than for Black girls. There are some included differentials acknowledged by the show between Anne and Delphine, for example when Marilla is taking care of Delphine and takes her to the store, she is discriminated against based on the assumption that Delphine is her child – and therefore mixed raced and specifically Black. These scenes, though attempting to accurately depict racism that occurred during the late 19th century and even today, creates a binary that separates white girlhood from Black girlhood. Delphine’s loss of her mother will always be distinctly different than Anne’s. Delphine, as a Black girl, will not be truly incorporated into the Avonlea community like Anne. Delphine will have trouble going to school, playing, and socializing with other Avonlea girls because of her race – all activities that define Anne so radically as a figure of girlhood.

5.3 Ka'kwet and the Mi'maq

Indigenous peoples in Canada have been the recipients of immense social, political, and governmental violence and strife. The long history of genocidal actions toward the indigenous groups by the Canadian government have left deep scars within indigenous communities and Canada as a whole, and have immense repercussions for indigenous girlhoods. One of the most egregious and long-lasting impacts is the theft of indigenous people by the government. Historically this culminated in the practice of residential schools, that existed to colonize the children of indigenous people to become 'civilized' English citizens. The last residential school closed in Saskatchewan in 1996. And while the closing is long overdue, there is still the continued colonization and separation instituted through the disproportionate amounts of indigenous children in CPS custody. With the 2013 Ontario Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect showing that "Aboriginal children are more than 130% more likely to be investigated than White Children," and "Aboriginal children are 168% more likely to be placed in out-of-home care during an investigation," ("Interrupted Childhoods: Over-Representation of Indigenous and Black Children in Ontario Child Welfare"). There is extensive data to support that Indigenous girls are dramatically affected by gender-based violence and sexual assault (Gouvernement du Canada). For indigenous girls, there is a complicated relationship with the modern-day understanding of 'girlhood', particularly a Bildungsroman girlhood that is founded on English colonial principles of gender, race, and sexuality. Self-defined, indigenous girlhood is "rooted in the language, customs, and relationship with the land unique to each respective Indigenous nation," and "there are stories that connect Indigenous girlhood as a collective," (Lindquist, et al.). Though I want to incorporate diverse and different understandings of girlhood in my research, it's important to note that the concept of girlhood is fundamentally rooted in Protestant colonialism that cites the 'right' girl as protestant, heterosexual, and white. As Haidee Lefebvre discusses in her article "Overlapping Time and Place: Early Modern England's Girlhood Discourse and Indigenous Girlhood in the Dominion of Canada," historically indigenous girlhood was shaped by the tension between indigenous girls roles at "the heart of the fur trade," and the traders' implementation of 'European girlhood' that saw girlhood as a stepping stone to matrimony (Lindquist, et al.).

The experience of the Mi'kmaq people is an essential plot point in season 3, and once again part of Moira's master plan of diversifying the people and characters of Prince Edward Island. In the original *Anne of Green Gables* series, there is only one mention of the indigenous Canadians – as Anne looks out her window and thinks about the indigenous name for Prince Edward Island, Abegweit (Shields 4). As part of a modern retelling of *Anne of Green Gables*, there comes the modern expectations of reckoning with the effects of settler colonialism and indigenous genocide. Ka'kewt is a young Mi'kmaq girl who befriends Anne in season 3. Her father is head of their tribe, and they interact with the young people of Avonlea selling hockey sticks to the boys. Anne seeks to learn more about their culture and writes about the people in her school paper. In a meta-narrative sense, this plot arc recognizes the ways in which the show itself is recognizing and writing about narratives historically erased and ignored.

Ka'kwet's narrative revolves around her experience at a Catholic residential school, her escape from the school, and subsequent capture. The narrative is not one of a happy ending, and the focus on the trauma and unhappiness experienced by the kind, imaginative (much like Anne) Ka'kwet forces the audience to confront colonialism. Many were upset by the fact that Ka'kwet was not able to permanently escape the residential school, but it serves an important purpose. In the show's anti-racist and decolonial paradigms, it has to acknowledge that indigenous girls are still living within a racist colonial Canada. By giving Ka'kwet a happy ending would be ignoring the hard truth – that there is still a continued fight for indigenous girls. It is Mrs. Rachel Lynde, a beloved childhood character, and notably Avonlea matriarch and 'ideal woman' that introduces and helps Ka'kwet to the residential school. Even Anne, encouraged by her own positive experience with learning and school, encourages Ka'kwet to go to the residential school and gifts her with her beloved puff sleeve dress. Marilla's comments about the Mi'kmaq people, Rachel's proclamation of the common phrase 'kill the Indian save the child' make the audience have to confront the narrative that it is 'other' bad people that perpetuate racial and genocidal systems. Instead, much like Gilbert in his relationship with Bash, that these colonial people, and many white people today, that perpetuate and continue these racist, colonial systems.

5.4 French Acadians

I want to briefly discuss how the treatment of the French Acadians in *Anne with an E* differs from in the novel. In the novel, Jerry Buote (In the show, Jerry Baynard) is the hired farm hand that is the labor replacement after the accidental delivery of Anne. In the television show, he becomes an instrumental character to the main cast who highlights the mistreatment of the French Acadians on behalf of the English settlers. French Acadia has a long and complicated history that doesn't quite fit with the traditional western mythmaking of settler colonialism. The French came to Acadia first as explorers and traders, established permanent residency, and then were forcibly deported due to English conflict ("Acadian"). There are many notable differences that differ from English and other European colonialism of the time. First, there were no laws against interracial marriage, with many Acadians marrying Mi'kmaq women and vice versa ("Chapter Three The First Acadian Community"). There is evidence that these marriages took place under both Roman Catholic and indigenous Mi'kmaq rites (Patterson). This is significant as it is important to note that while the Acadians were European settlers, they too were negatively affected by Protestant colonialism.

The show highlights the ways they are mistreated, evident in the novel as well. Jerry is illiterate, unable to go to school like the Protestant Avonlea children, and instead must work to help support his large family. In season 3, after Jerry begins a fling with Diana, his family is introduced as kind and loving, in sharp contrast to Diana's family circumstances in which she is stifled by the cold gender and family expectations relations of the English middle to upper class. While I will again talk about this in the brief economic class discussion of my analysis, it is relevant as the French Acadians were an ethnic minority in the late 19th century Maritimes.

Anne's role in all of these plots around race, as with the ideal modern girl, is that of an activist – though, from her interactions with encouraging Ka'kwet to go to school, conversations with Jerry and Bash, she is somewhat still complicit in the systems that surround her. Anne actively works against these systems, though within the narrative she has consciousness-raising moments that are a catalyst toward her activism. For Ka'kwet, she and Matthew travel with Ka'kwet's parents to try and break her out of the residential school, though the attempt is unsuccessful. With Bash, Anne reflects the modern girl's experience with various forms of anti-racist activism. When Anne first meets Bash, she immediately starts talking about the "Ancient

kingdoms of Africa and the Moors of Spain, but I've never actually met a colored person before," ("I Protest Against Any Absolute Conclusion", 26:16). This uncomfortable incorporation works towards the various ways modern girls still need to learn and work towards anti-racist activism. Anne's active recognition of systems, and attempts (sometimes successful, sometimes not) to get others around her to recognize and change these symptoms, is parallel towards the activism of young girls coming of age in 2020. Among various social justice movements, specifically in the light of the Black Lives Matter movement, racial activism is a fundamental aspect of coming-of-age.

6.0 Sexuality

Anne's maturation is reliant on her identity and the communication of her identity with other characters. This includes that of her sexual identity. It is important to establish that L.M. Montgomery, in both personal journals and *Anne of Green Gables*, has a long history of queer interpretations. The intense nature of relations between women within the novel allows for various homosocial analyses to emerge. Robinson in 'Bosom Friends' outlines various homosocial and perhaps queer relationships Anne has in the original novel. Likewise, in "'Sex matters': L. M. Montgomery, Friendship, and Sexuality," a response to the controversy surrounding her "Bosom Friends" article, Robinson discusses the ways that sexuality was conceptualized in L.M. Montgomery's life. The emergence of the hetero/homo sexual binary that we know today came to popularity in the late Victorian era, with sexologists attempting to define what is 'normal' sexual behavior, and pathologize 'abnormal' sexual behavior (Katz, 86). Within the "fast changing discourse that pathologize[d] women's same-sex attractions," Montgomery was careful to construct a narrative of her life in which she was definitely non-lesbian, in engaging with and perhaps a result of the emerging sexology studies of the time which "pathologized [women's friendships and intimacies]," making these desires "unacceptable and threatening," (Robinson, 13; White, 44). Though I will explore specific examples from Montgomery's life and journals and the role they play in *Anne with an E*, it is essential to establish the nuance in Montgomery's authorial intents surrounding women's sexuality, lesbianism, love, and marriage. As Robinson explores in her paper, "Montgomery's journals forge an intimacy with [Isabel] at the very same moment they deny it," (Robinson, 185). The specifics of these inconsistencies and debate over Montgomery's supposed/denied lesbianism is not of critical matter in this work. Only that it is important to know that Montgomery was aware of emerging sexology discourse in her personal, public, and authorial life referencing in her journals the work of Andre Tridon, who warns about the rise of feminism and 'homosexualism' (Robinson, 179). In analyzing *Anne with an E*, there is obviously a quite different public perception of sexuality, lesbianism, love and marriage. While there are still those who might have views similar to the sexologists that Montgomery was engaging with in the 1930's – namely calling LGBTQ persons 'sex perverts,' they are now recognized as a culturally small

homophobic minority in western culture. In the following I discuss various expressions of queer desire in *Anne with an E*, and the role they play in establishing new norms for girlhood in the 21st century.

6.1 Aunt Josephine and Aunt ‘Gertrude’

Though the introduction of Aunt Josephine in *Anne with an E* is slightly different than in the original text, Anne and Aunt Josephine still have a few heart to hearts. After discussing potential alternatives for marriage, Aunt Josephine is shown grieving her, “Dear Gertrude” whom she, “loved with all [her] heart” (“Remorse Is the Poison of Life”, 42:02). Josephine explains to Anne that though she never married, she was married in her own way to Gertrude. This would be conceptualized to us now, and L.M. Montgomery at the time, as a ‘Boston marriage’ in which two older women choose to spend their life together. These Boston marriages are ripe in the original texts of the *Anne of Green Gables* novels, with Miss Patty and Miss Maria in *Anne of the Island* and Aunt Kate and Aunt Chatty in *Anne of Windy Poplars* who “share not only a home but a bed,” (Gubar 53). In specific regards toward a queer and political media analysis of the text, these relationships in the original text provide evidence, along with Montgomery’s own life herself, that alternatives to traditional marriage were considered, and romanticized (Gubar).

In connections toward girlhood, we can see how a part of the modern coming of age, as depicted in *Anne with an E*, is learning about and interacting in queer spaces. In season 2, Aunt Josephine throws a party for Aunt Gertrude. This party is filled with what would be the modern-day drag scene, with individuals experimenting with Victorian gender presentation, and what could be described as Pride. Whereas Anne reads from *Jane Eyre*, to honor Gertrude who also would read from a book every year, Diana comes to the realization that her Aunt Gertrude and Aunt Josephine were romantically involved. This critical relationship and realization forces all of our main characters of season 2, Anne, Diana, and Cole to interrogate their own sexualities with considerations to non-heterosexual and gender diverse individuals.

Though I will discuss how this affects Diana’s own plot and arc later, this introduction of LGBTQ issues signifies a significant turning point in Diana’s maturation that mirrors that of the

modern-day adolescent. Today, with the rise of LGBTQ prominence and the landmark legalization of gay marriage in 2015 in the United States and 2005 in Canada, western girls learn and come to recognize this community within their girlhood and adolescence. Whether they eventually realize that they are a part of this community as ally or member, or become part of the society that opposes LGBTQ individuals, there is a recognition and negotiation between the LGBTQ community and a girl's identity. For Diana, this means initial disgust and indignation surrounding Josephine and Gertrude. She cries that it's 'unnatural' and not right. While Cole and Anne disagree and reassure her that it is not unnatural and for lack of better wording, that 'love is love.' Eventually, Diana comes around to the love between her Aunts and apologizes to Josephine for ever thinking there was anything wrong with what her and Gertrude had. This arc mirrors that of a girl growing up in a homophobic society who matures into more accepting views.

6.2 Cole

In addition to Aunt Josephine and Aunt Gertrude, there is likewise the original *Anne with an E* character of Cole Mackenzie. Cole is initially shy, likes to draw, and hangs out with the girls more than boys. This character is coded as Anne's 'gay best friend'. The inclusion of this character particularly as a best friend of the main character signifies that a young male gay character is normal and is a significant part of a girl's adolescence in our current times. Though the fetishization of a 'gay best friend' has become a concern for LGBTQ activists, the inclusionary practices of *Anne with an E* move beyond this as Cole is given own agency and plot, in which he deals with homophobia, and internalized homophobia on behalf of his schoolteacher Mr. Philips. There is a complicated relationship wherewith the representation of gay male characters in *Anne with an E* potentially falling into the trope of the predatory older gay character. While I recognize and acknowledge that critique, I theorize that Mr. Philips is there not to form any sort of relationship with Cole, or even the potential of a relationship – rather to show Cole what he does not want to become. This realization opens a pathway for Cole into going to art school and living with Aunt Josephine. Though he is not directly plucked from Montgomery's novels, I argue that Cole Mackenzie is a potential adaptation of Anne's son

Walter from the later novels. Dunn in “Chores and Domestic Life in Juvenile Literature” argues that Montgomery coded Anne’s son Walter as a gay man through Walter’s “inability to conform to his gender role [as] a matter of intense personal anguish and public shame” (Dunn 23). Like the relationship between Rilla and Walter in *Rilla of Ingleside*, Anne cares immensely for Cole’s well-being and reputation within the Avonlea school (Dunn). Much like Walter’s injury from typhoid fever, Cole is injured when Billy pushing him off a ladder results in a broken hand. And, though Walter’s creativity manifests in a perchance for poetry, Cole’s manifests in a talent for sketching and sculpting. Lefebvre makes the compelling case in “Walter’s Closet” saying, “Not only is Walter described explicitly as feminine and artistic, poetic and romantic, stereotypes associated with male homosexuality, but Montgomery does not show him taking an interest in girls, not allowing him to enter the heterosexual dynamic,” (Lefebvre, 15). And while Cole is not coded, but rather outwardly states that he likes boys the “way he’s supposed to like girls” this connection presents a negotiation with queer identity and gender relations within the original text. Anne as a character has always been loving and accepting to those who are different which extends toward those who are of different sexualities.

Anne’s relationship with Cole signifies communication with the LGBTQ community that uniquely connects modern girlhood with the traditional characteristics of Anne. After Cole engages in a fight with Billy Andrews, Anne and Cole meet at the Storybook Club’s hideaway in the woods. They discuss the incident with Mr. Philips, that being that Mr. Philips almost made an advance on Cole. I want to linger here for a moment, the politics of this are messy and somewhat uncomfortable. Those who are familiar with the time period and role of teachers in 1890s PEI are aware that Mr. Philips would be around 18-20 years old. This is not made explicit within the show, and there is somewhat of a trope of the ‘pedophilic’ homosexual desire. While the narrative makes clear that this is a case of internalized misogyny on the part of Mr. Philips when Cole says, “He wanted to punish me, because he couldn’t punish himself,” (“Struggling Against the Perception of Facts”08, 21:28) there is confusion within the narrative. Why Mr. Philips? The narrative, within the larger arc of the story, does play into greater societal relations of PEI and contrasts Anne’s acceptance of Cole with Mr. Philip’s fear of rejection and embarrassment from the community. While I do not wish to make a moral judgment on the ‘goodness’ or ‘badness’ of the scene, it’s important to recognize the moral complications of such a moment within the show.

While I think that the show provides an overall good representation of queer relationships, I question why this stereotype of the ‘homosexual pervert’ was included in the show.

Cole, in coming out, connects himself to Aunt Josephine “but with boys” (“Struggling Against the Perception of Facts”⁸, 20:30). Anne’s reaction to Cole’s coming out is one of kindness, care, and immediate acceptance. This is not to say she is not surprised, it would be completely historically inaccurate for her to be completely unphased (as, perhaps, a 2020 girl might be from her effeminate friend coming out). In a larger context of this relevance within the text, a modern girl has friends within the queer community. According to a trend predictor, only 48% of Generation Z (born 1996-2015) identify as exclusively heterosexual, and 56% reported knowing someone who uses ‘they’, ‘them’, or ‘ze’ pronouns (Lewis). The average girl, then, is likely to be friends with and interact with someone from the queer community. Even in more rural, or conservative areas (such as the fictional Avonlea) acceptance and population of queer individuals is increasing. As I discussed previously, Anne is meant to be relatable as *Anne of Green Gables* is a story of learning morality. Anne’s behavior while Cole comes out is the 2020 ideal for reacting to such news from a friend regarding gender and sexuality. I discuss in my thesis how Anne’s maturation is reliant on her identity and the communication of this identity in the community. Here, in this moment, Anne matures. She is calm, supportive, and loving, taking Cole’s hand and saying, “Thank you for sharing that with me” (“Struggling Against the Perception of Facts”⁸, 20:35). Though Anne is angry and embarrassed due to an incident at school, she quickly shifts her attitude by being a loyal caring friend toward Cole. Furthermore, this moment provides for a rebellious, and social fighter Anne. In a response to Cole saying, “it’s against the law, to be like me,” Anne proclaims that “The law is wrong” (“Struggling Against the Perception of Facts”⁸, 20:50). This is a far departure from Anne’s of past in which Anne highlights injustices but never fights against them. Anne’s face has appeared on PEI license plates and is in many ways one of the national icons of Canada (Morrison). Her statement against the government of Canada, although a now previous government, presents a strong equality-fighting figure of Anne, and by extension girlhood that challenges social norms and legal systems.

6.3 Diana

Many scholars, such as Robinson, Gubar, and Drain highlight a homoerotic tension between Anne and Diana. Brief examples in this area include *The Bosom Friend: Lesbian desire in L.M. Montgomery's Anne books*, in which Robinson argues that Anne exists on the lesbian continuum (and, a presentation of said work which made international headlines). Additional examples include Kristen Proehl's work "'love of kindred spirits' Queer Friendship and the Evangelical Bildungsroman", in which Proehl provides a literary analysis of Anne and Diana's relationship in regards to queer theory, historical sexuality, and evangelicalism arguing that while Anne and Diana's relationship does not develop into a lesbian relationship, it does "facilitate the expression of queer desires" (Proehl 174). While I will not be analyzing the original text for my analysis of *Anne with an E*, these readings provide a vital context toward understanding the potential for, and I believe evidence of a queer reading of Diana in *Anne with an E*. Anne and Diana participate in not one but two commitment ceremonies, and while they are participating in childhood games, these vows are noted by Proehl to be "vows akin to a wedding ceremony," (Proehl 180). Proehl also argues that multiple times throughout the text, Anne imagines a 'Boston Marriage' with Diana saying, "Diana and I are thinking seriously of promising each other that we will never marry but be nice old maids and live together forever" (Montgomery 244). Similarly, Robinson provides a wider analysis of Diana's role within Anne's presupposed 'heterosexual' adult life – arguing that Diana and Anne's vows and Diana's presence in Anne's life play a distinct role that invokes what "readers associate with adult romantic love rather than girlhood affections," (Robinson 7). While I will not present every instance of potential queer desire, I find it important to reiterate these instances as a basis before integrating *Anne with an E's* adaptation of Diana.

Beginning my analysis of *Anne with an E*, I want to reiterate that nearly all of the above instances (see Boston Marriage, though I will discuss that later) are in *Anne with an E*. In fact, just as in the 1980's version of *Anne*, Anne and Diana's tearful goodbye, and tearful reuniting, is a distinct part of *Anne*. There are even moments wherein the girls are sitting around complimenting each other on their lips, Diana assures Anne that her lips are "perfectly pink and luscious," to which Anne replies, "Diana you without a doubt have the best most kissable cupid's bow, and the brightest smile to light any heart," ("The Determining Acts of Her Life", 1:19) As

evident through Montgomery's concern with the relationship in regards to Anne and Diana, and the aversion toward a primary romantic plot between Anne and Gilbert, I argue that the relationship between Anne and Diana is even more important toward the story than the head romantic relationship. This does not mean, though that Diana and Anne are adverse toward romance in 2020. While I will discuss Anne and Gilbert, and Anne and Diana's friendship later, here I will discuss the ways in which I argue Diana is queer coded within the text.

First, Diana is frequently in the games with Anne and their friends. In *Lady of the Lake* recitation, though the scene is not portrayed in the fullest towards in *Anne with an E*, Diana is prepared to be Lancelot, ("1:36). When Ruby discusses her sister's engagement, Diana unprompted begins to play pretend by 'proposing' to Ruby. By playing the prince this hints that Diana's character is created to be in romantic opposition toward that of a woman.

Next, there is Diana's panic when finding out about 'the truth' about Aunt Josephine and 'Aunt' Gertrude. Notably, the character of Gertrude is found in the original novel's as part of Anne's daydreams – quite literally a figment of her own identity. In *Anne with an E*, Aunt Josephine compares Gertrude to Anne and reiterates that Anne reminds her of Gertrude. During the Soiree, Anne revives the tradition and takes the place of Gertrude, reading from a passage in *Jane Eyre*. It is in this moment, the queer history of *Jane Eyre* not ignored, that Diana begins to realize that Aunt Josephine and her 'Aunt Gertrude' were in a Boston Marriage. Running toward Josephine's bedroom she finds a photo² in which Josephine and Gertrude are in wedding attire. Diana leaves the room in a panic and is next seen after the party with Cole and Anne. Anne and Diana then proceed to get into an argument about the nature of Josephine and Gertrude's relationship. Cole stays quiet, due to being in the closet, while Anne thinks its "spectacular," Diana thinks that it is "unnatural" curling up within herself and crying ("Memory Has as Many Moods as The Temper", 32:03). In this moment, Diana appears to be fighting against internalized homophobia, curling within herself, and trying to fight the 'disgusting' and 'unnatural' feelings she could be feeling herself. Cole speaks toward the pain of hiding in one's sexuality, notably both speaking about himself and comforting Diana, and we see Diana turn her head away in contemplation. This presents an opportunity for a potential revisit to these emotions in a later season, or in another plotline in which Diana recognizes and fights against this internalized homophobia. The concept, internalized homophobia, is not foreign to *Anne with*

² The show uses a real historical photo of a lesbian wedding of Miss Lily Elsie & Miss Adrienne Aucarde (Powell)

an E, as evidenced by Cole and Anne's discussion of Mr. Philips. Eventually, Diana apologizes to Aunt Josephine with an embrace saying "At the time, I didn't know how much I – didn't know... I'm sorry. My thinking was narrow I understand so much more now" ("The Growing Good of the World"¹⁰ 30:10). Much like Anne's initial acceptance of Cole and Aunt Josephine as one interpretation of a 2020 girl's negotiation with the LGBTQ community, Diana approaches LGBTQ negotiations with a conservative or homophobic attitude. The morality of *Anne with an E*, a morality that I will be open I share, interpreting the show from a feminist perspective, is one that celebrates the LGBTQ community and fights for their acceptance in society. The show, as well, shares this morality in highlighting the protagonist Anne as dictating an inclusive agenda. Though, similarly, the show knows, just like the world in 2020, that not everyone is going to be open toward the LGBTQ community initially. Others must overcome internal, and societal boundaries and historical ideological oppressions to accept and negotiate their own identity within a changing world. Diana, as the ever foil to Anne, represents that type of girlhood and in this moment further emphasizes that no matter the initial stance, a negotiation with the LGBTQ community and its politics are an essential part of a girl's maturation.

I now want to turn my attention toward the specific context of Diana's sexuality as presented in season 3. Though it may come as a shock to some long time Anne fans, *Anne With an E* presents a relationship with Jerry and Diana. On the surface, the relationship presents an opportunity to discuss the class and religious differences in the time period, and the way those class differences are mirrored even now. However, I want to take a moment to complicate what appears to be the simply Rich Girl – Poor Boy dichotomy. To the untrained eye, this at first appears to be a trope, albeit a somewhat wild mashup considering the history of Jerry's character within the Anne universe. Though, those who are more familiar with extended Anne and Montgomery lore will find several moments in which the pairing attempts to be setting up, or saying more than it appears, on the basis of sexuality. I am specifically referring to key details used by Robinson in *Sex Matters* as she argues for complicating Montgomery's sexuality and the impact of her sexuality in her writings. First, is that the relationship between Diana and Jerry bears a striking resemblance to the relationship between Montgomery and farmer Hermand Leard. Montgomery described this desire as uncontrollable, though unattainable due to social class and Hermans ranking as her social inferior (Robinson 173). This mirrors Diana and Jerry's relationship – Diana has akin to 'uncontrollable' desire for Jerry desiring a primarily physical

relationship with him (ie – kissing) whereas Jerry wants a more romantic relationship. This results in a myriad of problems, including Jerry feeling degraded both emotionally and intellectually by Diana. Of course on the surface Diana’s intense desire for Jerry, a boy, would be the opposite of queer. However, in relation to Leard and Montgomery’s relationship, Isabel Gammel argues that Leard was safe for Montgomery to sexualize, as she was able to femininize him due to his social class and occupation. Diana’s only interest in Jerry was the kissing, and even in her discussions with Anne about intimate relations, Diana wonders if there is something wrong with her for not feeling anything while kissing Jerry – except of course that it is fun. Diana even states during an impromptu visit to Jerry’s home that she lied about an injury to “experience something that’s important to [her]” (“A Hope of Meeting You in Another World”⁰⁴, 35:50). While the narrative would suggest that Diana would then say that Jerry is important to her, she instead says, “Freedom” (“A Hope of Meeting You in Another World”⁰⁴ 36:04) I argue that likewise, the narrative of *Anne with an E* is setting up this feminization of Jerry, and distance from heterosexuality to introduce a queer Diana. Additional support for this in relation to Diana and Jerry’s relationship is founded in the life of Montgomery, and the role that Frankenstein plays within the narrative. Matthew Cuthbert, in season 3, is teaching Jerry to reach and they are focusing on Mary Shelly’s Frankenstein. This book aids in the blossoming of the relationship between Jerry and Diana. Incidentally, Frankenstein also played a role in one of Montgomery’s largest examples of queer desire. When Montgomery’s cousin and closest companion Frederica Campbell was close to death, and Montgomery wrote her journal, “Frede, my more than a sister,” this “term of endearment recalls the exact phrase that Victor Frankenstein uses for his adoptive sister, who becomes his wife, in Marry Shelley’s Frankenstein.” (Robinson 171). While this bears no parallel to the relationship between Diana and Jerry, I believe this is further evidence toward a queer desire. The featured line of “We shall be monsters, cut off from all the world, but on that account, we shall be more attached to one another,” (“I Am Fearless and Therefore Powerful”, 18:45). Though it is a bit of a reach, I believe that in this connection is not incidental on part of the show’s creators, who obviously were intimately in tune with Montgomery’s journals, they even use quotes from her journals as lines in the show -specifically a response Anne gives toward Cole when he is considering suicide for being gay, “It is not what we get out of life, but what we put into it, and you bring so much!” (“The Growing Good of the World”¹⁰, 1:41). Embedded in *Anne with an E* are the journals of

Montgomery and believe that this connection provides significant evidence that queer desire was a foreshadowing within Diana's narrative.

Perhaps the most significant in arguing that there was a setup from a queer Diana is the character of Winifred. Winifred Rose, in *Anne with an E*, is a Charlottetown socialite who works at Dr. Ward's medical practice with Gilbert. Most importantly, she is in a love triangle with Gilbert and eventually is broken up with by Gilbert in favor of Anne. I suggest that Winifred in the third season was set up to be Fred Wright, Diana's husband in the novels, and other Anne adaptations. First, and most obvious is that Winifred is a feminine version of the name Fred, and Winifred Rose is a near anagram of Fred Wright. Of course, Winifred is introduced as Gilbert's love interest and plot complication between Anne and Gilbert. Though, interestingly, this character already exists in the canon of *Anne of Green Gables* by the name of Christine Dawson. The show is no shortage of 'deep cuts' in terms of calling out names from the Books in *Anne with an E*. In 3.06, Tillie recalls another Avonlea girl, Lavender Lewis, outcast by inappropriate sexual contact with a boy. In the books Gilbert courts Christine, why would they change the name so drastically, and so close to that of another character? I contend that this was a set up for an eventual Winifred/Diana endgame.

Beyond my personal frustration that this potential plot was cut after the cancellation of Season 4, this character shift reveals another aspect and type of girlhood's negotiation with modern society. Previously, I discussed how Anne is the friend to LGBTQ, and Diana – in her moment of internalized homophobia, represents a negotiation with queer identity from a homophobic background. Though I can only speculate on the actual completion of this plot, I believe that this setup would serve to question the ways in which girlhood has changed from the maturation to a heterosexual identity to a definition of girlhood independent of heterosexuality. Diana is so radically changed in *Anne with an E*. She repeatedly rebels against her parents, she goes to Queens, and she has sexual agency. While the sexual agency is a significant aspect of girlhood itself, Diana's coming of age into a non-heterosexual girl represents the movement of girlhood from reliant on patriarchal standards of heterosexuality toward an independent and autonomous identity of being a girl.

7.0 Mental Health and Ability

Though not as present as other aspects of identity, *Anne with an E* does complicate an abled identity primarily through mental health. As discussed previously, Walley-Beckett, the showrunner for *Anne with an E* discussed how she wanted to give an ‘edge’ to Anne and explore more of the realistic consequences of the things Anne has been through in her life – primarily focusing on the idea that through Anne’s previous placements and life as an orphan before Green Gables, she would have developed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Within the narrative, these PTSD flashbacks are primarily used within the first season to give flashbacks toward Anne’s life before Green Gables. Scenes including Anne being beaten by Mr. Hammond, harshly scolded by Mrs. Hammond, and harassed by the girls at the Orphanage into eating a mouse, provide backstory to Anne’s traumatic past. The narrative uses these scenes to highlight Anne’s optimism in the face of such disparity and give context toward her imaginative and often escapist reality.

Some, as I mentioned before, argued that this sullies the childhood wonder and innocence in Anne. However, there are many scholars that have argued that mental health and trauma are reoccurring themes in the *Anne of Green Gables* series, much as they were reoccurring themes in Montgomery’s life. In “‘The Other Was Whole’: *Anne Of Green Gables*, Trauma And Mirroring,” Katherine Slater works within a Lacan psychoanalytical framework to analyze “Anne’s active healing from early childhood trauma,” (Slater 167). Slater’s work is rooted at the intersection of psychology and literature. This work is fundamental in establishing both Anne’s fascination with the mirror, and her mirror friends as an expression of mental health. In *Anne with an E*, the first and last time we see Anne is through a mirror. First, through the reflection of a window as she looks out upon the landscape of Prince Edward Island (“Your Will Shall Decide Your Destiny”, 3:36). She is searching for and looking for an identity. To the extent that she has created imaginary friends on the abstraction of her reflection and voice. Her reflection as her friend Katy manifests during one of her most stressful moments, after she has slapped Gilbert, been humiliated at school, and ostracized by her peers (“An Inward Treasure is Born”, 8:06). Throughout the show, we see this abstraction fade. She says goodbye to her imaginary friends, and her reflection is shown in moments of growth – such as on her 16th birthday, and as Marilla

helps her into her first corset (3.10, 15:02). The final scene of *Anne with an E* is Anne writing a letter to Gilbert. She looks into the mirror as we hear her voice-over, “Dear Gilbert, I look like my mother,” (“The Better Feeling of My Heart”, 43.32). She smiles and is sure of her place in the world.

There are various examples of mental and physical health crises at Green Gables in *Anne with an E* such as both Matthew and Cole’s respective suicidal contemplation and Marilla’s decreasing vision. They exist as plot devices, and work towards the negotiation of mental health within a girl’s maturation, much like how there is a negotiation with racial advocacy and LGBTQ advocacy. Another interesting role I wanted to note was that of a deaf character introduced in the final episode of season 3. The casting call for this character, who would be a recurring character implies that the introduction of ASL would have been worked into the plot of *Anne*, presumably, with Anne and the other Avonlea-Queen’s girls speaking with Lily, the deaf and mute maid.

The negotiation with disability is increasingly relevant, with both the rise of mental health awareness and accessibility campaigns. Though there is still much work to be done to move forward from the historical stigmatization of mental health. For Anne as a character, the investigation of her mental health means that girlhood is complicated. Beyond a time in one’s life, the narrative takes Anne’s girlhood to be a point of significant trauma, as well as a point of significant joy. The introduction of a deaf character foreshadows a conversation in the narrative about disability in the Victorian era, along with a parallel conversation that comments on disability activism in 2020.

8.0 Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that Anne's maturation is reliant upon her negotiation with her identity, advocacy, and her community. Analyzing the *Anne of Green Gables* adaptation *Anne with an E* from a feminist media perspective, I found that while there are many aspects of girlhood that have remained since the late 18th century, there has been a fundamental paradigm shift. The girl's bildungsroman, though she individually still may be the white, heterosexual, abled, middle class, cisgender girl, must negotiate other aspects of identity.

There is still more work to be done regarding *Anne with an E*, *Anne of Green Gables*, and girlhood. As I mentioned previously, *Anne with an E* is not a perfect show. There is further discourse about the treatment of women of color on the show that must be addressed. Why must Diana have a happy, and liberating ending at Queens while Ka'Kwet and Mary do not? Additional work could be done from a film studies perspective, more closely analyzing the construction of cinematography, score, and setting choices. Furthermore, though not released during my research, Megan Follows is directing and starring in the thriller film "Maternal" with Amybeth McNulty. A movie in which one Anne Shirley actress is haunted by the former is certainly ripe for interpretation ("Maternal").

To conclude this work, I want to reemphasize the immense impact this show has had on various 'adolescent' girls – including me! During this research I found myself laughing at the thought of trying to explain various *Anne with an E* 'fandom' events of the past year to Lucy Maud Montgomery. From the billboards to now 1,389,820 signatures on a Change.Org petition, or the 'fancams' to Lucas Jade Zumann's³ online behavior - there is an immense amount of research on the impact of Anne left to be explored. Despite changes in girlhood, and the world around us from 1908 until 2020, I am certain that as long as girlhood changes and endures, Anne will change and endure with it.

³ The *Anne with an E* Gilbert actor engaged in an Instagram fight with fans who were harassing his real-life girlfriend.

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