

Modernizing a Classic: Adaptation Effects in *Anne with an E*

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Abstract

This article examines how the classic novel *Anne of Green Gables* is transformed in its contemporary screen adaptation, *Anne with an E*. The analysis explores the factors that shape narrative change, particularly authorial implication, directorial intervention, and the adaptation process itself. It considers how these influences result in significant transformations to the storyline. A close reading of the novel alongside the series highlights major shifts, including the introduction of new characters and events, the omission of others, and the expansion of implied themes. The findings demonstrate that shifts in medium, historical context, and creative interpretation inevitably produce either subtle or substantial changes in adapted works.

Keywords: Adaptation, cause and effect, inclusion, exclusion

Introduction

This article examines the causes and effects of narrative change when a written work is adapted for the screen, focusing on the Netflix series *Anne with an E*, the latest adaptation of Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*. The discussion is based on Hutcheon's Theory of Adaptation (2012) and other scholarly work that argues that newly produced audiovisual texts are shaped by several factors, including the director and the adaptation process itself. In addition, the director of *Anne with an E* has suggested that Montgomery implied specific messages in her book that required further exploration. This view becomes convincing when the author's words and context are examined more closely. The analysis, therefore, considers how adaptation, the author, and the director each contribute in different ways to changing the plot.

The first part of the discussion addresses the causes of narrative change. It focuses on adaptation theory and practice to show how the shift from page to screen affects the narrative. In line with the

literature review, adapting a written work to another medium clearly results in major changes to the new text, even when the book and the series share the same basic storyline. The analysis draws on Linda Hutcheon's Theory of Adaptation to examine the role of adaptation in reshaping the narration. Then it turns to the author's role in these changes, showing how Montgomery continues to shape the series' plot more than a hundred years after the novel's publication. The author's influence is discussed through two aspects: her journals and the implications embedded in her fiction. The final part of the "cause" discussion examines the role of the series' director, Moira Walley-Beckett, using four recorded and written interviews that clarify her reasons for presenting the story from a new perspective.

The second part of the discussion considers the effects of these changes on both the narrative and the audience. It examines how the factors mentioned above alter the narrative through the inclusion and exclusion of events and characters, as well as through the introduction of new themes in the series. Finally, it analyses the impact of these changes on young and adult audiences, drawing on reviews from Common Sense Media and Rotten Tomatoes.

The Causes of the Change

Adaptation: A Brief History

Adaptation has historically served as a means of retelling familiar stories within new cultural and artistic contexts. It has been in existence for thousands of years in various forms, including plays and theatre, like the myths and legends in the Greek theatre. "Audiences knew the myths already and went to the theatre to see how the stories were told" (Reilly, 2018, xxi). Adaptation is therefore not a modern phenomenon; for instance, Shakespeare adapted and reworked existing stories for the stage, introducing them to broader audiences (Hutcheon, 2006). The series *Anne with an E* is not a brand-new product, but a result of a process of adaptation. However, it is hard to say that it is a secondary work compared to its source, as it popularized and enriched the adapted text.

There are various definitions for the term "Adaptation"; however, this study focuses on Linda Hutcheon's definition. She defines adaptation as "an extended, deliberate, announced revisitation

of a particular work of art”, she also says that adaptation is a repetition but without replication, as it brings together the comfort of recognition alongside with the delight of surprise (Hutcheon, 2006, pp. 170 -173). Hutcheon, in her book, differentiates between two main types of adaptations: as a product and as a process.

First, adaptation as a product is “an announced and extensive transposition of a particular work”. So, we can say that Beckett’s *Anne with an E* is an announced and extensive transposition of Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables*. Hutcheon divided adaptation as a process into two subcategories of “creation” and “reception”. The first subcategory refers to a process of creative and interpretive act by the adapter, and it defines adaptation as a double process of re-interpretation and re-creation, which has been referred to as “appropriation” and “salvaging”. The second subcategory refers to the audience and their reception of the adaptation. In other words, the reception process is “a kind of intertextuality”, in the case that the adapted work is familiar to the receiver (audience). The reception of an adaptation re-interprets, renews, and re-creates the reception of the adapted work (Hutcheon, 2006, pp. 7- 21).

Adaptation’s Influence

Hutcheon theorizes adaptations by providing plenty of case studies and presenting a critical analysis of adaptations in different forms, including television, opera, theatre, music, theme parks, and movies. Adaptations may differ from their sources for many reasons. According to Hutcheon, adaptations are affected by various factors, including financial and artistic considerations, the filmmakers, and the target audience. Another reason is the change in time, and the national setting of the story may lead to major changes in how the adapted work has been interpreted artistically and ideologically (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 28). In line with Hutcheon’s theory, one of the reasons for the change here might be because of the time gap between the two works, as Montgomery’s book *Anne of Green Gables* was published in 1908, and the new adapted series aired in 2017. The new TV series has transformed the narrative from a classic work to a modern one, presenting new themes and ideologies to the narrative. Any adapted text must by necessity also involve the repurposing of ideas that implicitly or explicitly articulate a sense of a political engagement” (Hassler-Forest & Nicklas, 2015, p. 1).

Shifting Forms: From “book” to the “screen”

The communicative abilities differ from one medium to another, so what is suitable in a text may not suit a visual art. According to Hutcheon, telling a story (whether written or oral) will never be the same as transforming it into an aural and visual medium (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 23). The process of adapting a written work to screen follows a process of transposition, so the functions of the text (the dialogue and the narration) must find their position in the action world, which contains sound, speech, and visuals (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 40). This means that the audience is directly perceiving the story instead of imagining it while reading, which takes them to a different level and a different experience with the story.

L. M. Montgomery’s Effect

This section focuses on the author of *Anne of Green Gables*, Lucy Maud Montgomery, to show how even hundreds of years before the adaptation was released, she still played a role in affecting the plot of the new series. It is divided into two subcategories: The author’s journals and the author’s implications.

Montgomery’s Journals

Montgomery has written 10 journals, based on her life in Prince Edward Island, her home, and in Ontario, where she tells a dark story of the struggles she faced at that time (Ponciano, 2017). According to some published journals, critics like Jonathan Poletti and Adriana Pacheco drew links between the author and the heroine of her book. They believe that the classic *Anne of Green Gables* was based on aspects of Montgomery’s life, and that she drew on her own characteristics and experiences for the heroine Anne Shirley.

Montgomery wrote in an 1892 journal entry: “Elderly couple apply to orphan asylum for a boy. By mistake, a girl is sent to them”, and she says that this is the only thing that is taken from her life into the book (Pacheco, 2020). This is seen in her book *Anne of Green Gables*, the elderly siblings, Mathew and Marilla Cuthbert, wanted to adopt a boy to help them with the farm work, but Anne was sent to them by mistake, and they ended up keeping her. However, after comparing

her journals with her book, especially with her heroine, they turned out to be more alike than unlike. A prominent example of that is Montgomery's mother, who died at the age of 23 when she was barely two years old. At that time, she was left in the care of her strict grandparents by her father in Prince Edward Island. In this case, she was technically an orphan living with two elderly people. Looking at her heroine, Anne, she is also an orphan living in Prince Edward Island in the care of two elderly people. Being abandoned at a young age by her father, Montgomery implied her feelings of abandonment in her book, but the light tone of her narration mitigates the pain. Not only that, but Montgomery always wanted to be a writer, but this clashed with Canadian cultural norms in the late 1800s and the early 1900s, when women struggled to attend college or become published authors. Montgomery did not let society stop her from accomplishing what she wanted to do as she started writing from a very young age. She mentioned in one of her journals that she cannot remember a time when she was not writing. Montgomery tried to reach a wider readership by using pseudonyms such as Joyce Cavendish or Maud Cavendish to conceal her gender. She finally settled on L. M. Montgomery. Moreover, Montgomery completed a teacher's training course, studied literature, and became a teacher in the late 1890s (McIntosh, Devereux, 2013). This parallel appears in the novel, where Anne goes to college, becomes a teacher, and eventually becomes a writer. However, the struggle is concealed in books, but is highlighted in some of the adaptations, like Kevin Sullivan's, where Anne is struggling to be an educated and independent woman, which resembles Montgomery herself. Poletti believes that the main thing that links Montgomery with her heroine, Anne, is their deep relationships with their female friends. As he mentions, Montgomery had Frede as her female companion, who was special to her, and she thinks of her as "handsome". Furthermore, Montgomery did not seem happy on her wedding day, mentioning in her journals that she was "unhappy". However, when her friend Frede stayed with them, she said that she feels like she cannot live without Frede, whom she calls "my more than sister," which is taken from Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*, said by Victor to the woman he loves and wanted to marry (Poletti, 2021). This is shown in Anne's relationship with Diana, whom she calls "my Bosom Friend," which, as Anne defines it, "an intimate friend, you know, a really kindred spirit to whom I can confide my inmost soul" (Montgomery, 2018, p. 91). Critics like Laura M. Robinson investigated this subject in her paper "Bosom Friends: Lesbian Desire in L. M. Montgomery's *Anne Books*" in 2000.

Montgomery's Implications

Implied details in Montgomery's text have encouraged later adaptations to emphasize and dramatize elements of hardship, as seen in Kevin Sullivan's *Anne of Green Gables: A New Beginning* and Walley-Beckett's *Anne with an E*. The director Beckett mentioned in an interview with Aubrey Page in 2017 that Anne's backstory was already there in the book, which means that the author has implied dark things in her books, which are sugar-coated with her light tone. The new adaptation of *Anne of Green Gables* attempts to take the dark path and reveal these implications as "Montgomery's text carries certain undertones of abuse, they are subtle enough to not draw too much attention to themselves, it is almost as if going into more detail about Anne's past would taint the otherwise light story" (Sabaliauskaite, 2022, p. 20). The series highlighted Anne's traumatic past in the hands of her former adopters, using a lot of flashbacks, which are exaggerated compared to the book. In the book, a little insight is given about Anne's past, which does not give the readers any details about it. When Marilla Cuthbert asked Anne about her former adopters, whether they were good to her or not, Anne replied: "Oh, they meant to be – I know they meant to be just as good and kind as possible. And when people mean to be good to you, you don't mind very much when they are not quite – always. They had a good deal to worry them, you know." (Montgomery, 2018, p. 64) Anne tries to cover the mistreatment she experienced back then at the hands of her previous guardians by giving them excuses, as she says that Mrs. Hammond and Mrs. Thomas (her former adopters) had enough going on in their lives, like having a drunken husband and three sets of twins is tiring for both of them. She does not blame them for mistreating her. So, it is obvious that the details of the abuse are mostly left unspoken in the book, but are shown in the series, which makes it darker than Montgomery's light-hearted narration. Highlighting such details makes the audience understand Anne on a deeper level and understand the way she reacts to things in her life. This is likely because watching it on screen, with all the sound effects, conveys the feelings more effectively. These implications resulted in showing many scenes of Anne's traumatic past, like being slapped and punished by Mrs. Hammond, being hit with a belt by Mr. Thomas, and being bullied in the school and the orphanage as well.

Director's Rationale

In any adapted work, there should be an adapter who can serve as the director, author, screenwriter, editor, composer, or even some characters. Because movies and TV series are complicated works that require collaborative work in order to provide us with the final product, there can be more than one adapter. There are many reasons behind choosing a specific work of art to be transformed into a screen. One reason is the people's love for the novel, which ensures the adaptation will gain popularity and guarantee its success, just as the novel did. In this case, *Anne of Green Gables* is a beloved Canadian novel that has been adapted several times into different forms like movies, series, musicals, and cartoons. There is a rationale for directors' selection of the best-selling novels, which is to ensure a box office success (Hafeez, 2019, p.479). There are, of course, other legal, economic, educational, and cultural reasons as well.

According to Hutcheon, the adapter chooses from the novel what will be taken into the series (Hutcheon, 2006). However, it does not depend only on the director's preference for choosing what to include and what to exclude from the book. Directors must consider the types of audience watching the adaptation. There will be some audience who already know about the book, and other audience who have no idea about the original story; both types of audience should enjoy the adaptation in order for it to be successful. The movie adapters should clearly state at the beginning and end of the movie whether it is or is not based on the novel, for legal reasons. Even though the audience should not expect to watch a replica of the novel, instead they will watch the director's interpretation that created an independent movie based on the novel. In other words, directors must consider high expectations of the audience who have read the novel and, at the same time, satisfy the audience who have not read it by making them enjoy what they are watching (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 128). Directors are artists, and they want to show the movie based on their vision; the novel gives them a point to start with.

Beckett's Approach

Bringing Anne back from the early 1800s and contemporizing her to suit this generation's audience and convey certain messages sets this adaptation apart from previous adaptations. When Beckett was talking with her producing partner, Miranda de Pencier, they thought that it was the right time and the right climate to bring Anne back. Beckett thought about how they would contemporize it and said in an interview with Page: "We realized in talking about it that the conversations in the world right now are inherent and built into the existing L. M. Montgomery stories, the conversations in the world that pertain to Anne, I should say."

Conversations like feminism, bullying, and gender parity and equality, and prejudice against those who come from away" (Beckett, 2017, p. 2). This, as Beckett said, was a big inspiration for her to choose this particular book to transform into a screen, which makes this adaptation different from the rest. Beckett grounded her series in the foundations of parts of the book that are already there but not fully explored. Even with the changes Beckett has made, the series has achieved a seamless merging of Montgomery's words with this contemporary adaptation. She also said in an interview with Tom Power "by the time we get to the end, you can't really tell what was there (in the book) and what wasn't" (Beckett, 2017, 1:38). Beckett believes that showing the backstory of Anne, which is concealed in the book with the light tone, shows the growth of the character by shedding light on the things that she went through to show that she was not born with this resilience but came from a very hard lived experience. Beckett says in the interview with Page: "backstory is backstory, it's important to the character" (Beckett, 2017, p. 1). Many people think of Beckett's adaptation as dark and she replied to that by saying that her adaptation is not sugar coated, unlike the book, she says in the interview with Tom: "life in the Maritimes in the late 1800s was hard, life in a farm was hard. It's a scrappy challenging existence and I wanted a documentary level of real" (Beckett, 2017, 7:32).

The Effects on the Narrative and the Audience

The latest adaptation of the book *Anne of Green Gables*, *Anne with an E*, is affected by many factors, as mentioned above, including the author, the director, and the adaptation process. These factors affected the new work in different ways, including and excluding characters and events or

the way certain things are represented, which had a positive or negative impact on the audience. This subsection examines the effects of these narrative changes on both the storyline and audience reception. The analysis is based on a close reading of the novel and detailed observation of the series to identify key changes. This subsection also considers the adaptation's impact on both adult and young viewers.

Inclusions

Walley Beckett's *Anne* introduced new themes that were not in the book at all, including childhood trauma, LGBTQ+ issues, and racism. *Anne with an E* maximizes some gritty features that were concealed by manners in the 1908 book. Beckett portrayed untold backstories and foregrounded background characters as major players to discuss important themes and convey particular messages to the audience.

Inclusion of Background stories

Beckett believes it is important to show the backstories of some characters so the audience can understand them and see their growth throughout the series. She mentioned the backstories of most of the characters, even the minor characters like some students from Anne's class, as it talks much about the character. Also, Beckett used some of the characters' backgrounds to introduce her new characters and to present her new themes. The book *Anne of Green Gables* does not say much about Anne's past, even though she is the main character. However, the series showed a lot of flashbacks of her past that are important to show how traumatic her childhood was. Anne's traumatic childhood with her former guardians was shown from the very beginning of the series. In the book, Anne barely mentions her former guardians, Mrs Hammond and Mrs Thomas, and whenever she mentions them, she tries to be as lovely as possible by giving them excuses for mistreating her. However, the series explored her past more and showed scenes of her past in the form of flashbacks, either with her former guardians or in the orphanage. This, in its turn, affected her mental health as every time someone mistreats her or is harsh on her, she sees these flashbacks. She cannot handle any situation and immediately runs to the woods. There were some flashbacks of Anne being oppressed, punished, and tortured by her former guardians.

There were also scenes of her being bullied by the older girls at the orphanage and punished for the silliest reasons. Beckett builds Anne's character based on her backstory and shows how these experiences eventually helped her gain her independence. Another character is Gilbert, one of Anne's classmates who eventually became Anne's lover in the series. He was first mentioned in *Anne of Green Gables* in school, where he tries to get Anne's attention, but she ignores him until he pulls her red hair and calls her "carrots". She got angry and smashed her slate on his head and refused to forgive him since that time. However, the series built a romantic relationship between them. In *Anne with an E*, Gilbert Blythe's backstory is highlighted. His mother died soon after his birth, and he stayed with his sick father in Avonlea. Gilbert's tough life is shown as he tries to catch up with his lessons and take care of his old father, who died later on because of his sickness. Beckett used this as a reason to make Anne get closer to him, as she felt that they both were orphans, and they have a thing in common. Furthermore, Beckett used Gilbert's backstory as a vehicle to introduce the first black character in the series, Bash, who also have his own backstory that shows how hard his childhood was as a black person with a slave mother working for white people who cannot afford anything for him.

Moreover, Aunt Josephine's introduction in *Anne with an E* is different than the book, but in both narrations, Anne and Aunt Josephine have a special bond regardless of the age gap. Aunt Josephine is Diana's old aunt, mentioned a couple of times in the book and playing a crucial role in the series. She lives in Charlottetown and comes to Avonlea to visit Diana and her parents. The series highlights her backstory, which shows that she had never married and went to Avonlea to grieve her dear friend "Aunt Gertrude," who was later revealed as her romantic partner. Beckett used Aunt Josephine's backstory to introduce issues facing LGBTQ+ people, as Aunt Josephine helps other queer characters feel free to express themselves, such as Anne's gay classmate Cole, who is not mentioned in the book but introduced in the series as a new character.

Inclusion of Events

There were also inclusions of events that exaggerate Anne's traumatic experience. One example is when Anne lost Marilla's brooch. In the book, when Anne lost Marilla's brooch, she was

grounded in her room. However, in the series, she was sent back to the orphanage after losing the brooch and was accused of stealing it. Anne's traumatic past in the orphanage made her prefer to sleep under a tree rather than go back to the orphanage. After finding out that the brooch had not been stolen and had been on the chair the whole time, Mathew went to the orphanage looking for Anne to get her back, but they told him she had not returned. After a tough trip where he had fallen from the horse and injured his head, he finally found her in a train station, trying to make money by reciting some poems for the passengers. After getting her back, Mathew and Marilla told Anne that they would give her their surname "Cuthbert" to make her feel that she had a real family. None of these events is a part of the book, but Beckett builds on what is already there to make the story more dramatic. However, the theme of belonging is there in the book but is not fully explored as in the series, as Anne says in the book: "I've never belonged to anybody—not really" (Montgomery, 2018, p.28).

The series is more dramatic than the book as it includes more suspense and more plot twists. *Anne with an E* included many subplots that showed that Anne is unique in many ways. One of them is when Ruby's house (one of Anne's classmates) was on fire and Anne rushed to save the situation by preventing the fire from burning the whole house by going into the house and closing the windows and doors of the other rooms. This heroic move of Anne made Ruby who used to not like Anne, love spending time with Anne after being forced to stay with Anne until they get their house repaired. Beckett also presented Anne as a helper to many other characters, such as when she built a sanctuary of wood and leaves in the woods to spend some time alone reading and writing. She also used that place to gather with Ruby and Diana and help them improve their writing skills by writing different stories and reading them to each other. Not only that, but she also became a close friend with the gay character, Cole, and helped him to hide there whenever he feels that he cannot face society, or to escape from his classes. Their Sanctuary was destroyed by their classmate Billy, which did not happen in the book. Adding this scene of Billy makes the audience hate him even more, because he was not an important character in the book, but in the series, he is portrayed as an annoying and silly person who always ruins everything. Furthermore, Beckett also included two thieves who claim that they found gold in Avonlea, who stayed with Anne at the Cuthberts' house. The inclusion of them stealing Avonlea's people's money gives an uneasy feeling to the

audience. Moreover, there was also the inclusion of Gilbert's black friend Bash, who got married to a black woman who gave birth to his daughter and died later on, leaving her baby in the care of Bash. Beckett also included some marginalized Indians in the series who were oppressed in schools. In fact, there were no black, gay, or indigenous people in the book *Anne of Green Gables*.

Exclusions

Aside from the inclusions, some parts of the book are excluded and not shown in the series *Anne with an E*. Some omissions, such as Anne's broken leg incident, do not significantly affect the plot. are excluded or changed, like when Diana could not take the Queen's College exams because her parents did not want her to go to college. The series shows Diana taking the exams secretly without telling her parents, which does not suit Diana's character. More importantly, Mathew's death was blindly excluded and not shown in the series. It is important and essential part that affected Anne and Marilla in the book, where Anne refused to continue her college scholarship in order to stay and take care of Marilla, who had a really bad eye problem that got worse after Mathew's death. Even though Beckett's adaptation is darker than Montgomery's book, the book started with a light-hearted story and had a tragic ending, unlike the series, which has a happy ending.

New Themes

Beckett introduced various themes in her version of *Anne*, as she believes the book addresses contemporary issues she decided to build on and expand in the series. The book has already introduced themes of feminism, gender parity and equality, bullying, and prejudice against people who come from away, which the series expanded and made more obvious. However, themes of Black, Queer, and Indigenous people are not mentioned in the book but were presented in the series. The following analysis examines how these themes are represented in the series.

Gender Parity and Equality

The theme of gender parity and equality is one of the most recurring themes in the series. At the very beginning of the series, when Anne arrived at Marilla and Mathew's house, she was told that

they wanted a boy to help them with the farm work, and she was sent by mistake, as a girl can't do such things. Anne said, "girls can do anything a boy can do, and more!" ("Your Will Shall Decide Your Destiny", 25:34), trying to convince them to keep her with them instead of sending her back to the orphanage. Throughout the series, Anne proved to them that she was right, that she could do anything they wanted and more. Moreover, in episode four, when Anne lied to Marilla about going to school after being bullied, Marilla asked the minister to talk to Anne about how bad lying is. The minister ended up saying "If the girl does not want to go to school, then she should not go. She should stay home and learn proper housekeeping until she marries" and he continues "There is no need for her to bother with an education. Every young woman should learn how to be a good wife" ("An Inward Treasure Born", 18:40). This made Anne think that boys are lucky to have the choice to do whatever they want as she tells Mathew's helper "you are so lucky to be a boy, Jerry. Boys can do anything they want, and boys have every opportunity" ("An Inward Treasure Born", 20:00). The idea of women needing to stay home and taking care of their husbands and kids recurred again with Anne's sixteen-year-old classmate Prissy Andrews who is getting married to their teacher Mr Phillips. Prissy was planning to go to Queen's College next year, but Mr Phillips told her not to go to college after marriage because she would start her "wife's duty". Prissy's mother told her that she was supposed to start "a new tradition of educated wives who think for themselves" ("Struggling Against the Perception of Facts", 28:15). This problem is not only in 1800s Canada, but throughout history and in different parts of the world, women have been seen in that way regardless of their nationalities and racial backgrounds. The patriarchal society assumes that women's roles are just to provide care for their families and stay home all day. They also have the idea that women do not need to be educated or have important positions in society. However, the series has proven them wrong by having different leading female characters in *Anne with an E*. Mrs Rachel Lynde, the first character introduced in the book, is presented as the voice of Avonlea as she holds different leading positions in the society, and she speaks on their behalf to provide the society with their needs. Also, the growth of Anne throughout the series made her one of the characters who has a significant impact on developing the society with her ideas and perspectives. An example of that is when she was talking about the idea of marriage she said: "I'm not going to give myself over to someone and be a prettyish piece of property without a voice or ambition" ("Struggling Against the Perception of Facts", 32:38). The fact that women were seen

as nothing but a piece of property or an object is true and was one of the reasons for women to start a feminist movement to stand for themselves and have a voice of their own. Another leading female character is Miss Stacy, the first female teacher in Avonlea who came from the city. When she first arrived in Avonlea, she was riding a motorcycle and wearing pants, two things that no one from Avonlea expected a woman to do; they even said that she was dressed like a man for wearing pants. She came with all those contemporary ideas and behaviours that shocked most, if not all, of Avonlea's people. Through Miss Stacy, Beckett has introduced an independent, modern, and educated woman to show that even in the 18s there were educated women who stood against society's thoughts of what a woman should and should not be.

Bullying

The theme of bullying is in the book, but not as exaggerated as in the series. The book mentioned bullying Anne a couple of times for her skinny body or for her red hair, as Gilbert called her "carrots" in both the book and the series. The series showed bullying more, which makes the audience feel more pity for Anne. Beckett puts this obstacle of bullying in Anne's way and shows the ways she copes with it. From the very first day Anne was in Avonlea, she faced a lot of trouble fitting in with the others. However, Anne's uniqueness is obvious wherever she goes, a thing that Beckett got advantage of and used to show how cruel Avonlea's people can be. It is presented more like Anne is moving from one problem to another, which makes the viewers feel bad for her. Beckett showed the theme of bullying in two forms: flashbacks and the present. Anne's flashbacks in the asylum included some bullying scenes as she gets bullied by the older girls in the orphanage who will not leave her until she cries; they even threw a dead mouse at her once, which was traumatizing for her. The present is not better for Anne either; she was bullied from the first day in Avonlea, as some children kept calling her names like garbage girl, stray dog, and bad dog. There is also a scene of little girls running around Anne and singing "You're a little orphan, you lived in a trash can, garbage girl" ("I Am No Bird, and No Net Ensnarers Me", 2017, 35:20). Bullying was not only from the children, but also from the adults like when Mrs Lynde first saw Anne said: "they did not pick you for your looks, that is sure and certain" referring to her ugliness and her skinny body as she continues "She's terribly skinny and homely. All elbows and knees. Did you ever see such freckles? And hair as red as carrots! Dear, dear me.", and she started

laughing at her. (“Your Will Shall Decide Your Destiny”, 55:32). Scenes like these make Anne’s harrowing journey to be finally accepted in Avonlea clear to the audience.

Gender-Nonconformity

Beckett made a clear decision in stepping away from the original narrative by adding queer characters to the series. The queer characters are either not in the book or presented as straight in the book. Adding queer characters is Beckett’s idea of contemporizing the show and making it closer to today’s generation. The inclusion of these characters shows the experience of queer people in late 1800s and early 1900s Canada. It specifically shows their experience in rural areas like Prince Edward Island, as queer people are more linked to city life, as Baker says that the queers living in rural areas are often erased and marginalized (Gray et al., 2016). Bringing this theme into the series shows how queer people struggle to be socially accepted and how hard it is to come out to their families and friends. Not only that, but it raises the question of identity and their acceptance of themselves in the first place. Beckett allows the marginalized community to reclaim its place in history and popular culture by adding these characters to a classic work. Aside from Anne and Diana’s relationship, which raised many questions about it as their relationship started with vows and they became “Bosom friends” as mentioned before. There are other queer characters in Beckett’s adaptation: Cole, Mr. Phillips, and Miss Josephine.

Aunt Josephine Barry, Diana’s great-aunt, is a wealthy spinster who becomes Anne’s role model. She is mentioned in the book as a straight character, but the series has given her a queer identity. She had a female companion, Aunt Gertrude, whom Diana thought was her friend. Neither Aunt Josephine nor Gertrude got married, but Josephine did. However, Josephine told Anne that she was married in her own way (“Remorse Is the Poison of Life”, 13:02). Their relationship was a “Boston marriage,” a term that is associated with Henry James’ novel *The Bostonians*, which includes a long-term relationship between two unmarried women (Haggerty & Zimmerman, 1999). Josephine and Gertrude, who were seen as friends, are in fact a lesbian couple. However, Diana and Anne did not fully understand the nature of their relationship until they realized that they were

living like any married couple. Beckett expands Josephine's role to provide a safe environment for Cole, who is just starting his queer journey.

Cole Mackenzie is Anne's gay classmate, who is not mentioned in the book at all. He struggles to be socially accepted, or at least to be treated like the others. The other characters' homophobic reaction to Cole's identity suppressed him and made him more introverted than he was. He enjoys being alone and drawing, but he is stressed at school by Billy and his teacher, Mr. Phillips, who would not let him draw and usually harasses him. Beckett justifies her inclusion of Cole in the series in an interview with Indiewire "It would only make sense that there would be somebody in the class who is struggling with identity", she continues "It was unimaginably difficult to do so especially during that timeframe where it was illegal to be a homosexual, punishable by imprisonment and a death sentence – and punishable in Canada until 1969. I was very keen to include a story like that (Beckett, 2018, p. 3). Mr. Phillips punished Cole for his feminine behavior after styling Anne's hair in class and made him sit with the girls. However, towards the end of the series, Mr. Phillips himself realized that he was homosexual through Cole. Beckett used Cole as a mirror for Mr. Phillips to discover his homosexuality. Beckett said in the interview with Indiewire: "Also, in my mind their teacher Mr. Phillips has always been an unidentified closeted homosexual. He just has no idea that he was. I thought it would be fascinating to use Cole as a mirror for discovery on his part and see the two different journeys of those characters" (Beckett, 2018, p. 3).

Beckett did not stop there; in season two episode seven, Aunt Josephine hosted her first queer party after her companion's death, where Anne, Diana, and Cole were invited. That party made Cole realize that there are so many other people like him, which made him feel more comfortable coming out and telling everyone about his homosexuality. Anne's immediate acceptance of Cole's identity is surprising, which does not match the 1900s people's homophobia. Here, Beckett's touches make it easier for the queer audience watching Anne with an E as she presents different types of identities at different stages of her life. However, presenting this theme in a children's adaptation has caused backlash from conservative viewers of the show, as some reviewers on Common Sense Media said they were not prepared to see a "modernized" and "tainted" version of *Anne of Green Gables*.

Discrimination

Anne of Green Gables' community is all white and does not include any black or indigenous characters. However, Beckett's adaptation includes the representation of both black and indigenous people in her series, *Anne with an E*. Beckett succeeds in presenting the experiences of black and indigenous people in Canada during that time by highlighting both their successes and struggles.

The introduction of the first black character, Bash, is through Anne's classmate Gilbert, who met him while working on a steamship after his father's death. Through Bash, Beckett takes the audience to the dark side of the story where the black people were obviously discriminated against and oppressed. Beckett mentions in an interview: "I've had a master plan since I embarked upon this adaptation, because I've always been super uncomfortable with the fact that this is a very, very white world, and it doesn't reflect the reality of Canada's diversity then and now" (Beckett, 2018, p. 4). The suffering of the blacks is presented through Bash at first when he started warning Gilbert not to anger their steamship supervisor, as he said, "I've been a trimmer for ten years. More. This is all I have. I can't move up; this is it for me. And there is nothing for me on dry land. You are a white boy, you got options" ("Youth Is the Season of Hope", 17:17). There are scenes in Bash's hometown, Trinidad, where Bash's mother is working for the whites. She cannot be seen with her son or else they will think of him as a thief. Gilbert was shocked that there is still discrimination "I thought slavery ended here over 50 years ago," and Bash replies to him, "My family never left that plantation. Not granny, not mom" ("Signs Are Small Measurable Things, But Interpretations Are Illimitable", 16:41). The discrimination starts with Bash staying in Avonlea with Gilbert. Bash gets discriminated against everywhere he goes. He went to a shop once looking for salt trying to cure his tooth ache, but the shopkeeper refused to sell him salt and told him that he will not find care anywhere around here "you should be with your own kind in the Bog" and he explains "(the slum) for people like you outside Charlottetown", he kicked him out of his shop and told him to go back to where he belongs ("Struggling Against the Perception of Facts", 8:19). The Bog is a place outside the town where black people live there. Beckett says, "The Bog is the community that's just outside of Charlottetown, where people of color were marginalized and had their own community there" (Beckett, 2018, p. 4). Later on, Bash entered Gilbert's class to ask for help. Mr. Phillips looked at him disgustingly and asked him to stay in the cloakroom to not mingle with the

other students or get close to them. Not only that, but Billy also told him that he is not welcome there and accused him of attempting to kill him. He wasn't only rejected in these places, but also in the train station, where they refused to give him a ticket and told him that in this train, people of color work, not ride as passengers. Not only that, but Bash and his wife could not find any medical care in Avonlea because of their color.

Moreover, the discrimination is not only against black people, but Beckett also introduced some Indigenous characters who are marginalized as well. The oppression of the Indigenous Mi'kmaq people is presented through the experience of a little girl called Ka'kwet. Beckett mentions in the interview with The Televisen: "I've been planning to include the Mi'kmaq Nation because they were there on Prince Edward Island, and their story deserves to be told. They were never included in the books" (Beckett, 2019, p. 2). 'Indigenous' as defined by Stoddard as "the group of people who settle in an area or country" (Stoddard et al., 2014, p. 10). Even though the indigenous people settled in Canada many years before it was colonized, they still got excluded and discriminated against. Beckett presents the indigenous people in *Anne with an E* to show that they are victims of abuse and discrimination. Beckett used the indigenous people as a vehicle to show their rich culture and show the bright side of their community, as they are mostly presented as antagonists, as Stoddard says. The subplot that includes the Mi'kmaq people starts with Ka'kwet and her father selling hockey sticks to Avonlea's boys, where Anne sees Ka'kwet and decides to interview her about their culture, which takes the viewers on a journey of getting to know the Mi'kmaq's culture and experiences as marginalized people. Ka'kwet's horror experience at the residential school says a lot about the oppression they go through. Ka'kwet's excitement for school ended when she saw the type of school that accepts them. The school is not the type of school Ka'kwet wished for, as she only wanted to learn English like any other child. She leaves for school by train, and neither of her parents is allowed to accompany her. It turns out to be a school that tries to erase their original religions and cultures and teach them to be like other Christians. With her arrival, she is given a Christian name (Hannah) and is forced to cut her long hair. In the school, students are oppressed and abused, where the teachers (nuns) force Christian ideas on them. She successfully escaped from the horror and hid with her community in their tents. The representation of their community shows their rich culture and their skills that are mostly concealed in Western movies.

Effects on Audience

Anne of Green Gables is a children's book, but its adaptation, *Anne with an E*, does not seem to be aimed at the same audience. The series highlighted the issues mentioned above, which might not suit a young audience. *Anne with an E* affected the audience both positively and negatively, as the changes in the series conveyed its messages in different ways. There are many frustrated audiences with the new adaptation, according to their reviews on Common Sense Media. It seems that the new adaptation did not meet the expectations of some of the fans of the original *Anne of Green Gables* specially adult audience, as one says "Absolutely not *Anne of Green Gables*" and says that the series is meant to be for adult audience as she continues "In the first 3.5 episodes alone Anne is returned to the orphanage, almost kidnapped by a man with clearly sinister motives (who we then see kidnap another child), lives outside, begs in train station, is bullied horrifically by her classmates and older women from her community, enters a burning building, loses her mind and starts screaming at Marilla multiple times, lies about going to school, is beaten by her foster family, witnesses her foster father's death, begs her foster mother to not leave her, is bullied by the children in the orphanage who attempt to force feed her a dead mouse, snuggles with said dead mouse while sobbing, and discusses sex in a confusing way (amongst other strange moments)-none of this happens in the book", these scenes are more than enough to make the series a darker adaptation. Many other audiences say that the positive Anne is lost in this horrifying, dark, and violent adaptation. There are also other audiences who think that it is a means to convey political issues, as one says, "This show gets more and more political in a way that is just historically inaccurate", he continues, "The political agenda is obviously forced, it just ruins the real story". Other audience members also said about the show, "Disappointing", "Ruined a classic", "Pushes a liberal agenda", "awful", "terrible", "Dark", "Disgusting", and many other negative comments about the changes of the narrative (Parent Reviews for *Anne With an E*, 2017). The frustration of the adults might be because they grew up reading the beloved book and were not ready to meet a darker version of it. Some parents expected to see a blind recreation of the book and thought that it would be a good idea to watch it with their kids, which obviously did not go well because of all these inclusions. On the other hand, the young audience seems to love the way the book is contemporized, unlike the adults' reviews. As one wrote "This, finally, is *Anne of Green Gables* for our times: a darker, sadder, more realistic story about an outsider's will to survive". Children

show their admiration of the new Anne, saying, “I am in love with this,” as Anne is shown as so creative and imaginative. They also say that it is one of the best shows for teens (Kid Reviews for *Anne With an E*, 2017). Apparently, the young generation likes the gloomy shows and believes that they portray reality more than classic books.

Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that the narrative transformation of *Anne of Green Gables* into its contemporary screen adaptation, *Anne with an E*, is shaped by three significant influences: the adaptation process itself, L. M. Montgomery’s implied themes and authorial perspective, and Moira Walley-Beckett’s directorial interpretation. These factors interact to produce significant narrative changes, including the addition and removal of characters and events, the expansion of existing themes, and the incorporation of new ones that highlight the experiences of marginalized groups such as Black, queer, and Indigenous communities. The analysis shows that adaptations rarely replicate their source material precisely, broadly because shifts in medium, historical context, audience expectations, creative vision, and cultural or financial considerations inevitably reshape the story. In this case, the adaptation’s emphasis on darker undertones, expanded backstories, and contemporary social themes elicited mixed audience reactions: younger viewers responded positively to the modernized portrayal. In contrast, many adult viewers expressed dissatisfaction with the departure from the original text’s tone.

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