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## Fighting for What is Right: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Fan Campaign to Save *Anne with an E* from Cancellation

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FIGHTING FOR WHAT IS RIGHT: A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE FAN  
CAMPAIGN TO SAVE *ANNE WITH AN E* FROM CANCELLATION

BY MARIE E. ANDERSON

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master of Arts

Major in Communication and Media Studies

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2023

## THESIS ACCEPTANCE PAGE

Marie E. Anderson

This thesis is approved as a creditable and independent investigation by a candidate for the master's degree and is acceptable for meeting the thesis requirements for this degree.

Acceptance of this does not imply that the conclusions reached by the candidate are necessarily the conclusions of the major department.

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my grandparents,

Arnold and Marie Coulter,

for being my kindred spirits.

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## ABSTRACT

FIGHTING FOR WHAT IS RIGHT: A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE  
FAN CAMPAIGN TO SAVE *ANNE WITH AN E* FROM CANCELLATION

MARIE E. ANDERSON

2023

The *Anne with an E* fan campaign highlighted storylines of social issues that fans felt were important for society. Of particular interest to the fan community was a storyline from the series in which Anne and her friends organized a protest following incidents of sexual assault and censorship aimed at silencing girls from speaking out on gendered issues. This storyline was heavily referenced in the billboards that the fan-based campaign displayed in Toronto and New York City (Anne Nation, 2020). In this analysis, I used fantasy theme analysis (Bormann, 1972) and metaphorical criticism (Osborn, 2018) to conduct a visual and textual rhetorical analysis of billboard advertisements from the campaign in conversation with the television episodes that the billboards referenced. The billboards were found to contain visual rhetoric and metaphors that represented Anne's feminist values as a rationale for the fan-based community's own rhetorical vision, which emphasized fighting for what is right and making their voices heard. I conclude with implications, limitations, and future directions for research of fan-based campaigns as part of social movements.

## INTRODUCTION

On November 25, 2019, Netflix and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation made a joint statement, announcing that the show *Anne with an E* would be canceled following its third season (Petski, 2019). Show-runner Moira Walley-Beckett followed up with a message to fans on her personal Instagram account, confirming the news and expressing her gratitude for the experience of creating the show (Walley-Beckett, 2019-a). The series was based on the 1908 novel *Anne of Green Gables* but included updated storylines for a modern audience. Whereas storylines about Anne and other female characters from the book reflected the struggles understood by modern day white girls and women, efforts were made to diversify storylines beyond that of the novel and previous adaptations through the addition of new characters and storylines (Hnatow, 2020).

The show's cancellation led fans to retaliate. Cecco (2020) reported that one day after the announcement, fans took to Twitter to start a campaign for the show to be renewed. Hashtags created for the *Anne with an E* fan campaign included #saveAnnewithanE, #lettersforanne, and #renewAnnewithanE (Carr, 2021). However, it was #renewAnnewithanE that brought the most attention when it trended on Twitter (Fallon, 2020). Their protest only grew from there. The comment sections of CBC news articles were flooded with messages urging the network to change their mind (Cecco, 2020). Several fan artists posted drawings of characters from the show reacting to the cancellation (See Figures 2,3, and 4; Tapia, 2019; Mia, 2019; Emeri, 2019). Roughly 300,000 people had signed the online petition to renew the show by August of the next year (Cecco, 2020) and the petition obtained over one million signatures overall (See Figure 1), making it one of the top signed petitions on Change.org (H G, 2019).

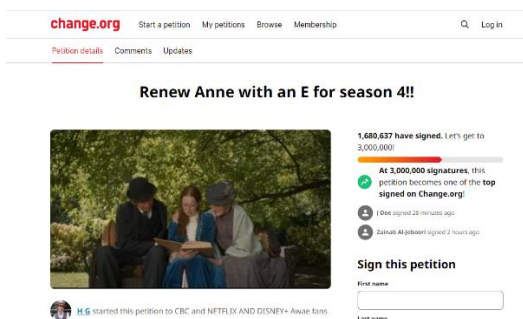


Figure 1. Petition. Screenshot of Change.org petition for Anne with an E to be renewed with over one million signatures (H G, 2019)

The fan base of primarily feminine identifying people was represented in the organization and management of the campaign (Kumar, 2021). The official website and social media accounts used to encourage mobilization of fans were run by twelve females of varying ages. Collectively, the administrators of these accounts spearheaded many outreach efforts, maintained a website, in addition to fundraising, designing, and facilitating the billboards for New York's Times Square and Toronto (Ahearn, 2020). The fan base self-described themselves as a fandom of working professionals, and students, who ranged in age from young adults to adults with grandchildren (Anne Nation, n.d.-a). The adult members of the fandom were significant additions in their ability to add credibility to the actions of the fans. Yet many of the most vocal and publicized advocates of the fan-based campaign have been teenagers and young adults (Kumar, 2021; Yeo, 2019), a detail that CBC and Netflix used to support the cancellation (Wong, 2019).

Although *Anne with an E* had a global fan base (Anne Nation, n.d.-a), the show was firmly rooted in a Western perspective on and off screen. Both the show (Walley-Beckett, 2017) and the book it was based on (Montgomery, 1908) are set in a fictional town in Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Canada. The show had a Canadian

showrunner (Wong, 2018), was filmed in Canada (Rowney, 2018), and produced in part by a Canadian public broadcaster (CBC/Radio-Canada, n.d.). Although Netflix has a global reach and their partnership with CBC allowed the television show to have a global audience (CBC/Radio-Canada, n.d.), they too are based in the western country of the United States (Netflix, n.d.). The fans took note of this when they based the only physical elements of the campaign in Canada and the United States. Thousands of dollars were raised online to fund the purchase of billboard space aimed at increasing knowledge of the campaign. These billboards, which contained art made by *Anne with an E* fans, were displayed in multiple locations in Canada and the United States (See Figures 5, 6, and 7). The most notable locations were Toronto and New York's Time Square (Ahearn, 2020).



Figure 2. Left. Not Today. Fanart by @luztapiart on Instagram to show of defiance towards those networks who cancelled *Anne with an E* (Tapia, 2019).



Figure 3. Center. This is Not the Last Chapter. Fanart by @welpsaucе on Instagram of Anne protesting the cancellation of *Anne with an E* (Mia, 2019)



Figure 4. Right. #RENEWAWAE. Fanart by @emeriart on Instagram of Anne holding a sign that references the use of hashtag activism (emeri, 2019).

The *Anne with an E* fan campaign highlighted storylines of social issues that fans felt were important for society. Topics of racism, gender bias, indigenous history, sexual harassment, and censorship were among the storylines mentioned in the text of the billboards, while the fan art used in the billboards referenced a storyline from the series, in which Anne and her friends organize a protest following censorship of their school

newspaper (Anne Nation, 2020). In this research study, I analyze the fans-based campaign to resuscitate *Anne with an E*. Specifically, I explore how fans-based media shaped the protest rhetoric for this show as a feminist series exploring the challenges of girlhood in the 21st century. Because the protest rhetoric used episodes from the show as part of creating a persuasive message, this study placed the fan campaign in conversation with the television episodes they referenced.

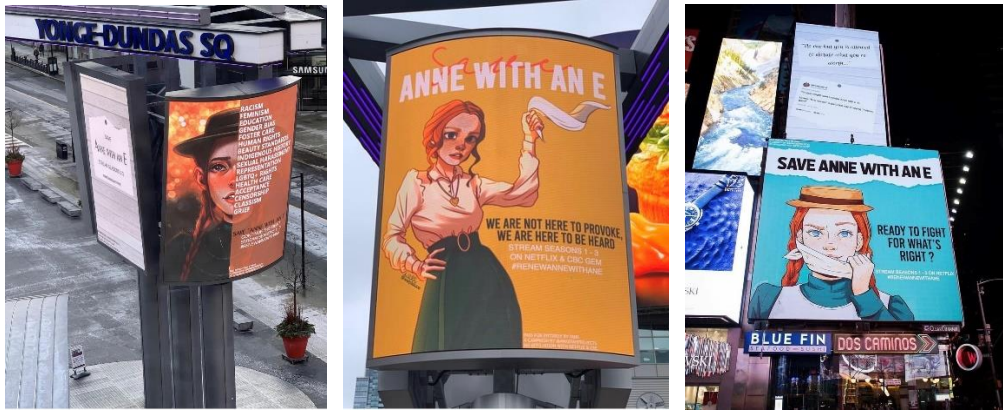


Figure 5. Left. Billboard with @jhuffizi art. Billboard featuring fan art by @juliauffizi on Instagram (Elina, 2020).

Figure 6. Center. Billboard with @welpsauce art. Billboard featuring fan art by @welpsauce on Instagram (Mia, 2020).

Figure 7. Right. Billboard with @luztapiaart art. Billboard featuring fan art by @luztapiaart on Instagram (Tapia, 2020).

I use visual and textual analysis to rhetorically analyze billboard advertisements created and funded by fans in protest of the cancellation of *Anne with an E* and the episodes most prominently referenced in the billboards. My goal is to contribute to the body of work on fan activism by examining the potential for intersecting interests between fan campaigns as they are traditionally considered and protests that have traditionally been considered political. I explore the rhetorical strategies used by *Anne with an E* fans in their campaign through the use of two critical, theoretical perspectives:

metaphorical criticism (Osborn, 2018) and fantasy-theme analysis (Bormann, 1972). More specifically, I use metaphorical criticism to evaluate metaphors used to connect the storylines of the show with the campaign motives. I then use fantasy-theme criticism to analyze the shared reality created through the campaign.

This first chapter includes a history of “Save Our Show” fan campaigns. I then explain the statement and background of the problem, and the purpose of this study. Finally, I conclude with definitions, an overview of chapters, and research questions.

### **History of “Save our Show” Campaigns**

Fan activist campaigns have been traced back to fan protests of the cancellation of *Star Trek* in the 1960s. *Star Trek* fans were reported to have marched to NBC’s Burbank office in protest of a possible cancellation. NBC later cited this march as one of the reasons the show was renewed for a third season (Pearson, 2010). Earl & Kimport (2009) likened the *Star Trek* protest to social protests, stating that photos of the march were virtually indistinguishable from photos of the civil rights movement, the women’s movement, and the anti-war movement. Yet they also noted that this type of protest was rare for fan activism. Despite there being a handful of times when fan protests have occurred in-person, the most commonly used protest methods among fans have been petitions, boycotts, letter-writing, and emailing campaigns addressed to television producers and networks (Earl & Kimport, 2009).

The growing popularity of the internet in the 1990s led to the creation of online avenues of protest. Fans were able to utilize forum boards as a means of driving traffic to petitions they created on petition hosting websites (Earl & Kimport, 2009). The creation of social media sites, such as Twitter, have led to further diffusion of online protests



while also creating new processes to the manner in which online protests are conceptualized (Himmelboim & Isa, 2018). Himmelboim & Isa (2018) found that both grass roots and traditional social actors have the ability to become social mediators in online protests, in part through the use of hashtags as a means of expanding reach.

Hashtag activism is a term used to describe the use of internet hashtags for protest purposes. This method of activism was created following the introduction of hashtags on Twitter and the term came into popular use following the Occupy Wall Street Movement in 2011 (Dadas, 2017). However, the beginning of this method of activism has been attributed to the Arab Spring, a movement that was sparked by a fight between a Tunisian street vendor and a police officer. People across the Arab world began to protest, using social media as a way of scheduling their protests and getting the word out to people around the world (Sapra, 2020).

Following Arab Spring, hashtag activism was adopted by subsequent social movements around the world. Russian youth used the method in protest of Vladimir Putin and other public officials whom they suspected of tampering with election results. Meanwhile, the hashtag #Kony2012 was used to protest against Ugandan warlord Joseph Kony (Sapra, 2020). Hashtag activism for social issues has grown in popularity in recent years, with two of the most prominent social movement hashtags being #MeToo for protesting sexual assault and #BlackLivesMatter for protesting racial inequality (Lampinen, 2020). The ability to create and spread a memorable hashtag across social media has become an integral part of recent fan campaigns to save television shows. In addition to the Anne with an E campaign, examples of fandoms that have used hashtag activism include Sanditon and Lucifer (Carr, 2021).

Modern day fandoms that have created “Save Our Show” campaigns range from period drama *Sanditon* to contemporary sitcom *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* and fantasy drama *Lucifer*. *Sanditon* was renewed by its original television network, although fans were disappointed that the lapse in time between the first season and the renewal meant some of the actors would be contractually unable to return for the next season (Carr, 2021). *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, which originally aired on the Fox network, was picked up for a sixth season by competing network NBC (Goldberg, 2018). *Lucifer*, which had also originally aired on Fox, was picked up by the streaming service Netflix for its fourth through sixth seasons (Wright, 2021). Given this recent context and relevance of “Save our Show” campaigns, I now turn to my research study and the statement of the communication problem.

### **Statement of the Problem**

As a whole, fan activism relates to any complaint that fans attempt to rectify with organized action (Earl & Kimport, 2009). “Save Our Show” campaigns are a subsection of fan activism directly meant to offset the cancellation of a show (Earl & Kimport, 2009; Pearson, 2010; Guerrero-Pico, 2017). The existing literature has conceptualized the phenomenon of fan activism as one with specific motivation, implications, and connections related to fandoms and media producers (Scardaville, 2005; Pearson, 2010; Guerrero-Pico, 2017; Earl & Kimport, 2009). However, many possible angles to study the phenomenon still remain unstudied. One such unutilized method of studying fan activism is through rhetorical analysis. In contrast, traditional forms of activism and social protest have been considered significant areas of study by rhetoricians (Riches & Sillars, 1980; Jensen, 2001; 2006).

The focus that fan campaigns place on entertainment interests has led to the form of activism to be considered non-political (Earl & Kimport, 2009). The phenomenon has instead been solely placed within the larger context of fandom activities by scholars (Earl & Kimport, 2009; Pearson, 2010; Guerrero-Pico, 2017). The assumption that activism meant to change the outcome of a television show is non-political, presumes that there are no social or political implications of fans' investment in television shows. However, the way fans react to a show has been found to be intrinsically related to the type of community and conversations the show fosters (Hoewe & Sherrill, 2019; Holbert et al., 2003; Russell & Schau, 2014). Therefore, I argue for the importance of considering the subject matter of the television show in conversation with the claims of fan-based campaigns to determine possible implications related to social movement and protest rhetoric.

Each adaptation of the book *Anne of Green Gables* has carried with it the societal expectations and tropes of the time period during which it was made. *Anne with an E* has been explicit in its presentation of the societal expectations and tropes regarding contemporary feminist and civil rights concerns (Hnatow, 2020). Similar to the assertions of Hoewe & Sherrill (2019) that drama programs that depict women in political roles had a direct connection to female viewers' decisions to become politically active themselves, the fan campaign highlighted ways in which the actions of *Anne with an E* fans were motivated by the political activism of the character of Anne (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a). Emulation of the television show can be seen in their creation of visuals, taglines, and text for the billboards (Anne Nation, 2020).

Fan efforts resemble the efforts of young people who have become the voice of traditional social movements. One such example of youth led movement for traditional social justice is March for Our Lives, a prominent youth-led movement that focuses on promoting civic engagement, education, and direct action aimed at ending gun violence (March for Our Lives, n.d.). Female youth activists that are known for their impact on large scale social movements include Malala Yoisafzai, Greta Thunberg, and Amanda Gorman. Yoisafzai is from Pakistan and has focused on fighting for girls' right to education (Malala Fund, n.d.). Thunberg is from Sweden and a champion of environmental justice (Nordstrom, 2019). Gorman, who served as the inaugural U.S. youth poet laureate, is from America and advocates for change through her poetry on the topics of oppression and marginalization (Walsh, 2018). All show that it is possible for girls and young women to have a say in the future in a similar manner to the way that *Anne with an E* fans have with their campaign.

With the content of the campaign in mind, I argue that, although the desired outcome of the *Anne with an E* fan-based campaign remained within the realm of entertainment concerns, the campaign did call for social change. The fan-based campaign to resuscitate *Anne with an E* used visual rhetoric and metaphors that reference episodes of the show to advocate its return to television and persuade producers of its significance and audience appeal. Therefore, the *Anne with an E* fan campaign is an appropriate example of a fan protest in which the social interests expressed through a piece of media were a significant influence on a fan campaign. This research study uses the *Anne with an E* fan campaign to explore fans-based media production at the intersection of protest rhetoric and feminist rhetoric.

### **Background of the Problem**

As mentioned in the previous section, the fan campaign to save *Anne with an E* highlighted ways in which the actions of *Anne with an E* fans were motivated by the political activism of the character of Anne. The fan art on their billboards directly referenced a storyline from season three of *Anne with an E* in which Anne and her classmates protest against sexual assault and censorship by demonstrating at a town council meeting (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). Quotes made by Anne to rally her classmates before the protest in these episodes (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a) were reframed in billboard taglines. Mention of the different forms of representation in *Anne with an E* provided additional text for the billboards (Anne Nation, 2020). These actions correlate with the assertions of Hoewe & Sherrill (2019), who found that drama programs that depict women in political roles had a direct connection to female viewers' decisions to become more involved with politics themselves, as can be seen through the fan campaign.

Previous research on "Save Our Show" campaigns has looked at the motivations fan activists had to join protests of a show cancellation (Scardaville, 2005) and the symbolic connection between fans and producers that shifts the power dynamics between the two groups (Pearson, 2010; Guerrero-Pico, 2017), as well as how the fan activism fits within the larger context of fan activities (Earl & Kimport, 2009; Pearson, 2010; Guerrero-Pico, 2017). Jenkins (2015) looked at a fandom that used their collective voices to support prominent social movements. However, these actions stand in contrast to the previously mentioned fan activism, as they were trying to lend their support to a cause unassociated with their fandom rather than trying to cause change that directly correlates with their fan related interests (Jenkins, 2015).

The choices made by *Anne with an E* fan creators were also important contributions to feminist protest rhetoric. Study of protest rhetoric from the different waves of feminism has made a significant contribution to the existing literature on social movement rhetoric. Areas of interest have included the rhetoric of women's suffrage (Dow, 1991; 1999; Slagell, 2001), the rhetoric of women's liberation efforts during second wave feminism (Campbell, 1973; Nachescu, 2009; Poirot, 2009) and the conscious-raising rhetoric of the third wave of feminism (Sowards & Renegar, 2003; 2004; 2009) To analyze the *Anne with an E* fan campaign as an artifact that falls within the intersection of protest rhetoric and feminist rhetoric, I utilize the lenses of metaphorical criticism (Osborn, 2018) and fantasy-theme analysis (Bormann, 1972).

Metaphors were a significant rhetorical strategy used not only in the fan campaign, but also in the *Anne with an E* television show. Whereas the fan campaign used the television storylines as a visual metaphor for the efforts of the campaign, the turn-of-the-century storyline were metaphors for contemporary feminist issues. Janusz (1994) argued that metaphor is a powerful force in feminism. Application of metaphorical criticism and to study feminist rhetorical messages have included the study of Disney princesses (Farris, 2020), celebrity activism (Batterson, 2016), the rhetoric of women involved with politics (Dosterglick, 2022; Puls, 2014), and the rhetoric used to describe women in politics (Anderson, 2002. Edwards & McDonald, 2010). In connection with the use of metaphor, *Anne with an E* began a fantasy chain with the use of turn of the century storylines as metaphors for contemporary feminist issues (Walley-Beckett, 2017).

Fantasy-theme analysis is best used to analyze the shared view of reality experienced by rhetorical communities. Borman (1972) suggested the application of fantasy-theme analysis for the study of social movement rhetoric and application of fantasy-theme analysis has included studies of the effectiveness of countless movements (Baldo, 2010; Duffy, 2003; Jackson, 1996; 1999; Meador, 1996; Prentice & Boange, 2011). The fantasy chain started by those producing *Anne with an E* was carried over into the rhetoric of the fan campaign, with the shared fantasy surrounding a protest causing fans to participate in their own unified fantasy (Anne Nation, 2020). Through this study, I delve deeper into the implications of the rhetorical vision created by fans.

### **Purpose of the Study**

With this study, I contribute to literature on fan-based campaigns. Previous research on “Save Our Show” campaigns has looked at the motivations fan activists had to join protests of a show cancellation (Scardaville, 2005), the symbolic connection between fans and producers that shifts the power dynamics between the two groups (Pearson, 2010; Guerrero-Pico, 2017), and within the larger context of fan activities (Earl & Kimport, 2009; Pearson, 2010; Guerrero-Pico, 2017). However, a limited amount of research currently exists on the rhetoric of fan protest. The findings of this campaign will extend knowledge of how these fan-based campaigns showcase the power of fans’ advocacy. While a study of certain other fan campaigns might lead to insight in the processes that resulted in a TV show being brought back, a study of this fan campaign will mainly lead to insight in terms of how this kind of fan-based campaign rhetoric influences the community of fans through their rhetorical vision.

Additionally, this study added to scholarly conversations surrounding teenage girl's feminist protest rhetoric. Sowards and Renegar (2006) argue that feminist protest can come in many forms. Traditional feminist activism has included social organization and public protest, while more contemporary feminists have come to also view everyday actions meant to uplift women as feminist activism (Sowards & Renegar, 2006). Third-wave feminists embodies feminism by challenging sexist, homophobic, and racist comments and actions, embracing individual choice, and being media savvy (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). Spreading awareness of feminist values and practices through social media platforms have been a common way in which teenage girls in the third wave of feminism have chosen to participate in feminist activism, as the action fits within the means available to them (Keller, 2019).

This study expands on scholarly knowledge of how youth-led activism is conceptualized by exploring the possibility that youth-led activism can involve social justice elements without being purely focused on social justice. Rather, social justice protest may be found within activism for seemingly innocuous causes they feel passionate about. Because the *Anne with an E* fan-based campaign has been categorized as youth-led (Kumar, 2021; Yeo, 2019), study of the campaign will lead to knowledge of how young fans, specifically, view social justice as a part of other facets of life.

## **Definitions**

In this section, I define terms that are essential to the understanding of this study. I begin by defining terms that relate to the rhetors of the artifact and the subject matter and purpose of the artifact. The definitions to be included are fan, fandom, feminism, activism, and protest rhetoric. Finally, I provide definitions that are important to the



understanding of the theoretical lens I use. I include definitions for metaphoric criticism and fantasy-theme analysis. These ideas will be explored in more depth in Chapter Three.

Bielby et al. (1999) distinguishes fans as being separate from casual viewers of a television series. Being the viewer of a television show is a private activity but being a fan of a television show requires a person to participate in activities that go beyond watching the show. Fans read fan magazines, write letters to actors, and interact with other fans online, among other activities (Bielby et. Al., 1999). Jenkins (2007) defines fandom as an extension of fans. He argues that fans are individuals, while the term “fandom” relates to consumption as a social, networked, collaborative process. Fandom has the ability to harness collective intelligence (Jenkins, 2007).

For the definition of feminism, I first look to Offen (1988). They state that the term was coined by combining the word “femme,” which means female in French and the suffix “ism,” which means “political position” in French. Together, the two parts of the word mean to have a political position about females (Offen, 1988). Feminist rhetorical perspectives suggest that the dominant ideology, also referred to as hegemony, empowers men and oppresses women (Przybylowicz, 1989). To further explain the purpose of feminism, I look to Hooks (2000), who defines feminism as a movement to end sexism, sexual exploitation, and oppression. Although a main concern of feminism is to fight against societal values that favor men and boys over women and girls, feminism is not about being anti-male. Rather, the goal of feminism is to challenge sexism in a manner that liberates everyone (Hooks, 2000).

Who is included in feminism has had a contentious history, with racial minorities and the LGBTQ+ community being among those who have historically been left out of mainstream feminist conversations (Hooks, 2000). It is made apparent in *Anne with an E* that Anne embraces the third-wave feminist value of intersectional feminism (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). In addition to fighting for the rights of white, cisgendered people who self-identify as girls and women, Anne also includes racial and sexual minorities in her efforts to foster justice and is open-minded when learning about identity groups previously unknown to her (Walley-Beckett, 2017). As a rhetorical community, the *Anne with an E* fan base embraces intersectional feminism through referencing the multidimensional representation of minority groups on *Anne with an E* when describing why they wanted the show to be renewed both within their media outreach (Yeo, 2019) and billboards (Anne Nation, 2020).

To define activism, I look to the definitions of two different areas of activism as they relate to this study. First, I look to fan activism, which relates to any complaint that fans attempt to rectify with organized action (Earl & Kimport, 2009). “Save Our Show” campaigns are a subsection of fan activism directly meant to offset the cancellation of a show (Earl & Kimport, 2009; Pearson, 2010; Guerrero-Pico, 2017). Next, I look to feminist activism. Soward & Renegar (2006) argue that feminist activism can come in many forms. Traditional feminist activism has included social organization and public protest, while more contemporary feminists have come to also view everyday actions meant to uplift women as feminist activism (Sowards & Renegar, 2006). To define protest rhetoric, I look to Morris & Browne (2001), who state the protest rhetoric is the

study of how symbols shape our perceptions and invite us into action. Symbols that invite protest include words, signs, images, music, and even bodies (Morris & Browne, 2001).

Many of the issues discussed in *Anne with an E* are ones that can affect women of all ages. However, the subcategory of feminist activism that correlates most fans to the fan campaign and characters in *Anne with an E* viewing themselves as agents of change is the idea of girl power. Although girls throughout history have found ways to express their own sense of agency, the 20<sup>st</sup> century was a time in which western society began to acknowledge teenage girls as their own cultural category, leading the way for deeper discussions of the empowerment of girls (Woodcock, 2022). In the 1990s, the phrase “girl power” was adopted as a slogan by musical groups Bikini Kill and the Spice Girls. The concept was used to encourage friendships between women while also serving as a beginning step for young girls to embrace their individual worth and agency (Gillis & Munford, 2004).

The mantra was later entered into the Oxford Dictionary and defined as power exercised by girls and associated with a self-reliant attitude, ambition, assertiveness, and individualism exhibited by girls and young women (BBC News, 2002). Girl power is exhibited by characters in *Anne with an E* when the characters, especially the ones who are girls, refuse to let their young age cause them to be passive participants in decisions being made about their lives (Walley-Beckett, 2017). This trait would later be adopted by fan protesters who based their rhetorical vision on the values of the show (Anne Nation, 2020).

Osborn (2018) describes metaphoric criticism as the process of discerning how metaphors influence a persuasive argument. A metaphor can be considered any object or

phrase that is used as a symbol to describe the characteristics of a different object or person (Osborn, 2018). Within metaphoric criticism, the object being explained is referred to as the tenor. The symbolic lens that is applied to the tenor is referred to as the vehicle (Richards, 1965). For example, when Anne is teasingly referred to as “carrots” because her hair is red, she is the tenor and carrots are the vehicle (Montgomery, 1908). Analyzing metaphors through a rhetorical lens requires isolating the metaphors in the artifact, sorting the metaphors into groups based on patterns, and finally discovering an explanation for the artifact (Ivie, 1987).

I look to Bormann (1972) to define fantasy-theme analysis. The fantasy-theme method of rhetorical criticism is designed to provide insights into the shared worldview of groups. A major assumption of fantasy-theme criticism is that people create a shared conscience or fantasy when they are involved in group conversation. This fantasy can influence group members’ beliefs and their actions to fit within the group’s vision. To understand how fantasy-themes are present in an artifact, a rhetorician codes the repeated elements of settings, characters, and actions in the artifact, creating a shared rhetorical vision (Bormann, 1972).

### **Overview of Chapters**

While this chapter argued for the significance of this research study, in Chapter Two, I articulate the context surrounding the fan-based campaign to bring back *Anne with an E*. More specifically, I explain the rhetors, audiences, and subject/purpose of the campaign. Then in Chapter Three, I describe the theoretical, critical perspectives that I use to analyze the feminist, protest rhetoric of the campaign, including metaphoric criticism (Osborn, 2018) and fantasy theme analysis (Bormann, 1972). Chapter Four is

the chapter where I apply those critical perspectives to the fan-based campaign to bring back *Anne with an E*, to determine how and why the rhetors used textual and visual-based rhetoric to persuade their audiences. Finally, in Chapter Five, I use my analysis from Chapter Four to answer the below research questions, discuss applied and theoretical implications, address limitations, and conclude with future areas of study.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions I frame the study through are as follows:

**RQ1:** How do metaphors influence the overall rhetorical message created by fans in the *Anne with an E* fan campaign?

**RQ2:** What rhetorical vision emerges from the *Anne with an E* fan campaign?

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

As a rhetorical situation, “Save Our Show” campaigns present a unique role reversal of rhetors and the audience. Television fans typically serve as the audience, while television producers and executives become rhetors through the rhetorical messages presented on their television shows. Fans reconceptualize the relationship between producers and fans when they make efforts to direct their concerns about a show to the show’s producers (Pearson, 2010; Guerrero-Pico, 2017). Fans have been able to present their own rhetorical message about the cancellation of a show, thus making them the rhetor of the campaign, something that has become increasingly effective through use of the internet (Earl & Kimport, 2009; Guerrero-Pico, 2017; Pearson; 2010). I expand on the demographic characteristics of both the rhetor and the audience in this chapter, before concluding with the subject and purpose of the *Anne with an E* fan campaign.

### **Rhetors: Fans of *Anne with an E***

Fans of *Anne with an E* were in many ways similar to fans of the source material and previous adaptations, with commonalities in gender (Mohabir, 2021; Kumar, 2021) and age (Simon & Schuster, n.d; Kumar, 2021; Anne Nation n.d.-a; Pacheco, n.d.). Fans of the *Anne of Green Gables* story may have become fans by reading the story or by consuming a specific adaptation. Those who first experience the story through a specific medium often become fans of other versions of the story, as was shown by the popularity of the 1980s miniseries (Pacheco, n.d.). However, just as any adaptation will differ from the original, fans will be influenced by the culture in which they experience an adaptation. One of the most noticeable aspects of the fandom for this iteration of the story that differs from previous adaptations is the way they use social media (Mohabir, 2021).

Therefore, I finish this section with a description of social media trends that have aligned with their behavior.

### ***Gender***

The dozen female administrators of the main social media for the campaign were touched upon in the first chapter. Although they contributed the most recognizable portions of the campaign through their maintenance of the main social media accounts and facilitation of the billboard campaign, women and girls can be seen throughout the entire campaign (Kumar, 2021). For example, the fan art chosen for the billboards was created by female fans (Tapia, 2020; Uffizi, 2020; Mia, 2020) and video updates on the campaign were made by a young woman named Mimi, who had become prominent within the fan community for posting video reviews of the show (Mimi1239, n.d.). The predominantly female fanbase has been a trend seen throughout all versions of the *Anne of Green Gables* story and has been attributed to the idea that young women can identify with the interests and experiences of the female protagonist (Mohabir, 2021).

In accordance with the argument made by Mohabir (2021) that women become fans of the character because they can relate to her, Anne of the book struggles with common adolescent worries, such as insecurities about her appearance and issues with school bullies (Montgomery, 1908). Meanwhile, Anne of *Anne with an E* deals with the concerns of girlhood in ways that are even more transparent to audiences. For example, in an episode of season one, Anne has a panic attack when she realizes she is having her first period (Walley-Beckett & Rozema, 2017). This identification with the character has led fans to make pilgrimages to Prince Edward Island, where the story is set. Fans often use a trip to Prince Edward Island as an opportunity to physically embody Anne Shirley,

both by being in the same places she lived and by dressing up as her. Tourist attractions in the area have leaned into this practice by offering the ability to purchase costume hats and braids similar to Anne's for fans that did not come prepared (Gothie, 2016).

When they do not relate, they can live vicariously through her, imagining that Anne's experiences are their own. One aspect of the story that has gotten more attention with the creation of film and television adaptations is the romance between Anne and Gilbert Blythe. Their relationship has become an ideal that women have wished to achieve themselves (Signore, 2007). Investment in the two often leads fans to write fanfiction about Anne and Gilbert and make fan video edits of the couple together set to popular music. In doing so, they were combining the modern with the established in a way that adds their opinion to the original narrative (Mohabir, 2021).

Regardless of the reasons why feminine identifying people enjoy *Anne of Green Gables* and its adaptations, gender biases undoubtedly play a part in the overwhelming female fandom. Dutro (2002) found that boys place more constraints on what they are willing to read and do not often read books with female protagonists by choice. In contrast, girls are less likely to consider gender of the book's protagonist as a determining factor when choosing a book to read (Dutro, 2002). A study by McGeown et al., (2012) found that of children ages 8-11, girls had greater intrinsic motivation to read books in general than did boys. Similarly, Holbert et al., (2003) found that, while there is a positive correlation between men who watch progressive dramas and those with interests in women's issues, men are a smaller portion of viewership for both traditional and progressive dramas that feature women's issues.

*Age*



At the beginning of *Anne of Green Gables*, Anne Shirley is eleven years old, and she has grown to be 16 years old by the end of the book (Montgomery, 1908).

Subsequent novels in the series revolve around Anne's life from around seventeen years old (Montgomery, 1909) until she is middle aged (Montgomery, 1921). Although *Anne with an E* begins with the same general plot as the original book, Anne in the television series has been aged up to thirteen years old. Anne celebrates her sixteenth birthday in the first episode of the third season and the series ends with Anne attending Queens Academy (Walley-Beckett, 2017), an event that takes place towards the end of the first book (Montgomery, 1908).

Due to the age of the protagonist, Simon and Schuster list the target audience for the books at between 8-12 years old (Simon & Schuster, n.d). However, many fans of the book and its adaptations do not view the story as one reserved for children. Themes such as finding love, discovering your self-identity, the meaning of life, death, family, security, community, and home have drawn people of all stages of life to become fans (Pacheco, n.d.). The universality of these themes clearly carried over into the fanbase for *Anne with an E*. They self-described themselves as a fandom of working professionals and students, who range in age from young adults to adults with grandchildren (Anne Nation, n.d.-a).

Yet many of the most vocal have been teenagers and young adults (Kumar, 2021; Yeo, 2019), a detail that CBC and Netflix used to support the cancellation. As reported by CBC News, Sally Catto, general manager of programming for CBC English Television, claimed a lack of audience members between the ages of 25-54 was one of the main reasons CBC and Netflix made the joint decision to cancel *Anne with an E*

(Wong, 2019). Fan bases for other shows on Netflix with teen and tween main characters have dealt with similar loss, as the cancellation of such shows has become a trend for the company. Other casualties have included *Julie and the Phantoms* and *The Baby-sitter's Club* (Lawler, 2022). The creator of *The Baby-sitter's Club* TV show criticized Netflix not only for canceling the show based on demographics, but also for not giving the show the proper advertising efforts to gain more adult viewers (Van Arendonk, 2022).

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that the main categories of fans being engaged in this study are those referred to as fangirls. A fangirl need not be a certain age, but rather relates to fans who identify as girls, especially if they are fans of a show or person with a large number of teenage fans (Gerrard, 2022). The term “fangirl” has an underlying connection to efforts made to devalue girls by a patriarchal society. Words used by popular media to describe fangirls have included fever, madness, hysteria, and obsession (Gerrard, 2022). Meanwhile, there is no male counterpart of the fangirl meant to stereotype boys for their interests in the same way (Busse, 2013). Although society has identified fangirls as a marginal group, many fans who also identify as girls have reclaimed the term fangirl as a positive attribute (Stanfill, 2013).

### ***Nationality***

Although told from a distinctively Canadian point of view, *Anne of Green Gables* and its adaptations have had a global impact. In 2017, Netflix and CBC partnered in the creation of *Anne with an E* to ensure it would have a similar global reach. The capabilities of CBC made it possible for *Anne with an E* to be authentically Canadian-created programming that could have a Canadian audience through their broadcasting platforms. Netflix, whose streaming service is available globally rather than the strictly

Canadian audience of CBC, allowed the show to accumulate an international audience (CBC/Radio-Canada, n.d.). As a result of Netflix's reach, the fanbase for *Anne with E* extended from Canada and the United States to places such as Brazil, India, and many more locations (Anne Nation, n.d.-a). The global demand for *Anne with an E* continued after its cancellation. Campaign organizers found that several markers indicated an increase in interest for the show globally, including social media growth, search trend growth, and increase in petition signatures (Anne Nation, n.d.-c).

### *Social Media Use*

Fans often use social media sites concurrently and for different reasons that depend on features. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Tumblr are used to communicate with one another and with the objects of their fandom. Fan edit videos are posted on YouTube, fan art on Tumblr, and roleplaying games on Twitter. Fanfiction writing is often found on sites specifically meant for the medium, such as [archiveofourown.org](http://archiveofourown.org) (Bennett, 2014). Many fandoms also pool their knowledge to create an online encyclopedia about the entity. One of the most prominent platforms for this is hosted by Wikipedia and referred to as a wiki (Jenkins, 2008).

*Anne with an E* is one of a handful of *Anne of Green Gables* adaptations to have been made in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Other interpretations have included a sequel where Anne is middle aged and reflecting on her past released in 2008, an anime series released in 2010, and a PBS movie special released in 2016. None of these adaptations garnered much online attention from their audience (Shaw, 2022). This stands in contrast to the audience for *Anne with an E*, who used their access to social media sites in order to express their continued interest in the show. Fanfiction for the adaptation that can be found on

archiveofourown.org dates back to May 9, 2017 (Archive of Our Own, n.d.). This was a little over a week after the final episode of season one aired on CBC and three days before the season debuted on Netflix (Anne with an “E” Wiki, n.d.-a). The wiki page was created a little over two weeks later, on May 27, 2017 (Anne with an “E” Wiki, n.d.). Fans benefited from their knowledge of social media when the cancellation was announced. Their online community was able to quickly mobilize their campaign in the first couple days following the cancellation (Murray, 2019).

Within rhetorical criticism, the term synecdoche is a term used to describe a strategy in which one part of a whole stands as a representative for the whole (Clifton, 1983). I argue that the administrators of the account @awaefanprojects served as the synecdoche of the *Anne with an E* fan campaign. They spearheaded many outreach efforts, maintained a website, in addition to fundraising and facilitating the billboards in New York Times Square and Toronto (Anne Nation, 2020). Their Twitter account garnered over 6,000 followers (AWAE Fan Projects Official, n.d.). Fans trusted the administrators of @awaefanprojects to advise them on how to direct their message to television executives through adding signatures to the petition (Anne Nation, n.d.-b) and use the money they donated in the creation of reputable advertising (Anne Nation, 2020), and fan artists trusted them to use and edit their artwork in the creation of billboards (Tapia, 2020; Uffizi, 2020; Mia, 2020).

### **Audience for the *Anne with an E* fan campaign**

The audience for the fan campaign was made up of many key players who added to the relevance of the argument in their own way. This included social media users (Carr, 2021, Cecco, 2020), celebrities (Shatner, 2019; Reynolds, 2020; Curry, 2020;

Simmons, 2020), and cast and crew of the show (Walley-Beckett, 2019-b; 2020-a, 2020-b, McNulty, 2019; 2020; Ricketts, 2020; Martyn, 2020). I begin my audience analysis by discussing these groups as the immediate audience. However, campaigns meant to get shows renewed have historically focused on getting the attention of executives from the media companies that produced the show (Scardaville, 2005). Therefore, I next discuss the streaming service Netflix and the public broadcasting service Canadian Broadcasting Corporation as the target audience of this campaign. I conclude my audience analysis with a section on fans as the agent of change.

### **Immediate Audience**

Fans first took to Twitter to start a campaign for the show to be renewed (Cecco, 2020) and brought attention to their campaign when their hashtag #renewAnnewithanE reached trending status on Twitter (Fallon, 2020). They expanded the campaign with a petition on change.org and by flooding comment sections of CBC news articles with messages urging the network to change their mind (Cecco, 2020). Therefore, those with accounts on these sites were the immediate audience for the campaign. The online audience would ultimately go on to break records. Roughly 300,000 people had signed the online petition to renew the show by August of the next year (Cecco, 2020). The petition would go on to become one of the top signed petitions on Change.org (HG, 2019).

Several celebrities supported the campaign via their social media accounts. In December 2019, actor William Shatner, who currently has 2.5 million Twitter followers (Shatner, n.d.), responded to a fan who asked for help with the campaign via Twitter with a quote from the series (Shatner, 2019). The next month actor Ryan Reynolds, who has

21 million Twitter followers (Reynolds, n.d.), replied to a thread started by Netflix to announce the last season of *Anne with an E* had been released on their streaming platform. In his response, Reynolds suggested that Netflix might want to renew the show and made a joke about the possibility they meant the third season was the midway point (See Figure 8; Reynolds, 2020). Other notable celebrities who tweeted their support during the next several months of the campaign included journalist Anne Curry (Curry, 2020) and rapper/producer Joseph Simmons (Simmons, 2020).



Figure 8. Ryan Reynolds' Tweet. Tweet made by Ryan Reynolds' in support of the fan campaign (Reynolds, 2020).

Yet the celebrities most willing to be part of the audience were the cast and crew of *Anne with an E*. Showrunner Moira Walley-Beckett and actress Amybeth McNulty, who played Anne, were among the many who tweeted out their support during the first week of the campaign. Both expressed their sincere gratitude that fans cared enough about a television show they were part of to start this campaign (McNulty, 2019; Walley-Beckett, 2020-a; 2020-b). They continued to show their support as the campaign hit different milestones. On January 14, 2020, Walley-Beckett, who has a following of 152 thousand followers on Instagram (Walley-Beckett, n.d), posted photos to her Instagram of herself standing under the fan billboards in Toronto, Ontario. McNulty, who has a following of 7 million on Instagram (McNulty, n.d.), posted a photo to Instagram of her own trip to the billboards with fellow cast members Glenna Walters and Stephen Tracy

on January 26, 2020 (See Figure 11). This post received over 880 thousand likes (McNulty, 2020). Other cast members that supported the billboards included Cara Ricketts (See Figure 9; Ricketts, 2020) and Christian Martyn (See Figure 10; Martyn, 2020).



Figure 9. Left. Cara Ricketts in New York's Time Square. Actor who played Mary LaCroix in *Anne with an E* visits fan-created billboard in New York's Time Square (Ricketts, 2020).

Figure 10. Center. Christian Martyn in Toronto. Actor who played Billy Andrews in *Anne with an E* visits fan-created billboard in Toronto (Martyn, 2020).

Figure 11. Right. Amybeth McNulty in Toronto. Actors Glenna Walters (Tillie Boulter), Amybeth McNulty (Anne Shirley), and Stephen Tracey (Mr. Phillips) visits fan-created billboard in Toronto (McNulty, 2020).

## Target Audience

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation was first created as a public radio broadcaster in 1936. By 1952, the corporation had grown to include public television networks and had introduced a soap opera by 1953 (CBC/Radio-Canada, n.d.). Today, the company includes many different radio and television platforms that focus on providing specialized content in both English and French, including children's programming, sports, news, and music (CBC/Radio-Canada, n.d.).

Netflix has a shorter history, having been created as a video rental service in 1997. They introduced their streaming service in 2007 and began to release original series

programming in 2013 (Netflix, n.d.). In 2017, Netflix and CBC partnered in the creation of two new television shows, one of which was *Anne with an E*. The combined capabilities of the two businesses made it possible for Canadian-created programming to obtain an international audience (CBC/Radio-Canada, n.d.). The partnership lasted three years before being dissolved in 2019. Catherine Tait, president of CBC, attributed the decision to the need to protect the long-term viability of their domestic industry. The partnership had meant they were still required to compete with Netflix for viewership and income (Benzine, 2019). *Anne with an E* was canceled not long after the dissolution of the partnership (Petski, 2019).

Fans attempted to target the networks through comment spamming and email campaigns. AnneNation.com, a website run by leaders of the campaign, offered resources for sending letters that included premade messages (Anne Nation, n.d.-b). The comment sections of CBC news articles were flooded with messages urging the network to change their mind, as were the comment sections of videos posted on Netflix's YouTube channel. Fans began responding to tweets about unrelated topics that had been posted on the CBC Twitter account with *Anne with an E* related responses (Cecco, 2020).

On November 26, 2019, CBC Kids News published an article in which they speculated that fans were using robots to artificially inflate the amount of interest in renewing the show. Their reasoning for this accusation was that many of the accounts tweeting about the campaign did not appear to represent actual people, but rather had been created the same month as the campaign (CBC Kids News, 2019). Fans asserted that this was because they did not want to spam the people they knew in their personal life with continuous messages about *Anne with an E* and instead opted to create accounts that



compartmentalized their efforts (Cecco, 2020). On April 17, 2020, CBC announced via Twitter that they would begin blocking *Anne with an E* related comments from their online news articles (CBC, 2020).

Netflix was slightly more willing to interact with fans. One day after the announcement of the cancellation, the official Twitter account for Netflix Customer Service, Netflix CS (2019) tweeted, “Hey there, can’t promise anything but please let us know how much you want to see it via this link” in response to a fan. The link led to a request page on Netflix’s webpage (Netflix CS, 2019). However, by May 3, 2020, they had a different response for a fan who had tweeted a screenshot of a live chat conversation between themselves and Netflix’s support team. The photo showed that the support team member had confirmed the renewal of *Anne with an E*. Netflix Customer Support tweeted that they were sorry for the misunderstanding, but *Anne with an E* would not be getting a fourth season (Netflix CS, 2020).

### **Agent of Change**

Although a decision by one or more media companies was needed for the main objective of the campaign to be met, I argue that fans considered themselves to be the agents of change. Leaders of the campaign sent a clear message that, through their combined voices, fans would be the ones to change the minds of network executives. They focused the majority of their effort on expanding the number of messages that Netflix and CBC received about the show. Tweeting parties were held to expand the reach of the campaign (Anne Nation, n.d.-d). The Anne Nation website aided fans with the ability to express their anger over the cancellation by offering a premade email template to personalize and send to networks (Anne Nation, n.d.-b). Rather than directly

addressing Netflix or CBC on the billboards, the rhetors urged fans to save the show by streaming it more times and tweeting about it. Media networks are not mentioned or addressed anywhere on the billboards (Anne Nation, 2020). In essence, the fans argued that the show had a chance of being renewed if fans refused to let the companies ignore their interest in more seasons. In the next section, I address the connection between the agents of change, audience, and the purpose of the content.

### **Subject/Purpose**

Whether the methods are marching in front of a television network's office, traditional letter-writing, or online petitions (Earl & Kimport, 2009; Pearson, 2010), the success of a "Save Our Show" has generally been measured by whether the show was renewed (Pearson, 2010, Carr, 2021). Scholars have also found that underlying the ways fans react to the cancellation of shows are the desires to fulfill the emotional and social needs that were previously met by the show (Russell & Shau, 2014; Scardaville, 2005). I begin my analysis of the subject with a discussion of fan grief processes following the end of a show. However, central to the historical context of this study is the understanding of how the history of feminism and feminist rhetoric was part of *Anne with an E* and later the fan campaign. Therefore, I also contextualize the waves of feminism that influenced the rhetoric of *Anne with an E* and subsequently the campaign.

### ***Parasocial Relationships and Fan Grief***

Horton and Wohl (1956) termed the phrase "parasocial relationships" to describe the interpersonal relationship that occurs between fans and people or characters in the media. Similar to social relationships, parasocial relationships start out superficial and have often grown deeper over time (Cohen & Eyal, 2006; Schiappa et al., 2005). Fans

have been shown to react to the loss of parasocial relationships with television characters in ways that are comparable to social breakups (Cohen, 2004; Cohen & Eyal, 2006).

Russell and Schau (2014) found that whereas the loss of television characters can have a significant emotional impact on viewers, the end of an entire show has been shown to impact the life of fans for several reasons. These reasons for grief include the loss of ability to see how the narrative would have played out in future episodes, the loss of social interactions that was tied to watching episodes with friends as they aired, and the feeling that their identity as a fan of the show will be more difficult to sustain (Russell & Schau, 2014).

Viewers process loss accommodation through the transformation of their relationship from parasocial to symbolic, transition through mourning rituals (similar to funerals), and connection with the larger fandom (Russell & Schau, 2014). The loss process as described by Russell and Schau (2014) shares similar characteristics with the findings of Scardaville (2005) regarding soap opera fans' motivations to join "Save Our Show" campaigns. These findings show that fans were motivated to join protests of a show cancellation for reasons that included wanting their voice to be heard, strength in numbers, anger at the choices of the corporation that owns the show, reinvesting meaning in something that they feel has been devalued, and protectiveness over characters and actors (Scardaville, 2005). Russell and Schau (2014) also asserted that post withdrawal actions are related to characteristics inherent to the show.

When asked to sum up why they felt the loss of *Anne with an E* so deeply, the majority of fans cited the intersectional representation. While being interviewed by the media, one fan stated that, as a person of color, she often feels that her and her cultural

history are ignored by television producers. *Anne with an E* acknowledged the fact that cultural minorities have a place in history and deserve to have their stories told in a beautiful and sensitive manner (Cecco, 2020). In addition to praising the representation of racial minorities and the LGBTQ+ community, fans also acknowledged that the representation of a main character who struggles with mental health issues helped them learn to cope with their own mental health issues (Yeo, 2019). In the next several paragraphs, I discuss how feminism was an inherent characteristic of *Anne with an E*.

### **Feminist Protest Rhetoric**

Friedman (1963) stated that the liberal feminist perspective focuses on ways gender inequality can be fought when women are given roles within society that have traditionally been designated for men and encourages the creation of these roles for women. The liberal feminism perspective originated from and aligned with the goals of first-wave feminists. The first wave of feminism took place from about the 1840s to the 1920s. Feminists from this wave were mainly concerned with giving women the right to vote, but also lead women to greater civic responsibility and the ability to own property (Hewitt, 2010).

*Anne of Green Gables* by L.M. Montgomery was published in 1908 and was set in the 1870s and 1880s (Montgomery, 1908). *Anne with an E* moved the story to the 1890s (Walley-Beckett, 2017). This firmly established the stories' origins and setting during the first wave of feminism. The show incorporated feminist topics of the time period. Discussions of suffrage, temperance, and the importance of education for girls were discussed throughout the first two seasons of *Anne with an E* with mixed reactions from characters (Walley-Beckett, 2017). In the feminist protest story arc from season three,

much of the conversation regarding sexual assault revolved around women's lack of financial or legal autonomy in the era and their subsequent reliance on men. The storyline ended with several women being added to the school board following their involvement in a protest (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a).

In addition to the influence of the first wave of feminism, *Anne with an E* was also influenced by contemporary feminist ideologies and discourses. The first episode of *Anne with an E* aired on CBC on March 19, 2017 (Anne with an E Wiki, n.d.-a). To put the creation of the show into the context of contemporary western feminist events, the first episode aired two months after the 2017 Women's March that took place as a protest following the inauguration of Donald Trump as the President of the United States (Women's March, n.d.). It also aired seven months before Alyssa Milano published the tweet (Milano, 2017) that sparked widespread attention of the #MeToo movement (Phlum, 2018).

Many of the themes and storylines from *Anne with an E* (Walley-Beckett, 2017) aligned with the efforts of third-wave feminism. Feminists in the third wave of feminism have worked to bring intersectionality to the forefront of feminist concerns, acknowledging that race, class, sex, and sexual orientation intersect with gender identity to impact the experiences of different women (Fixmer, 2003; Zack, 2005). In keeping with these contemporary feminist values, from the first season, *Anne with an E* expanded the world of *Anne of Green Gables* to include LGBTQ characters. The second and third seasons saw the addition of Black characters and storylines of the racial prejudice the characters face. One of the main storylines of season three brought forth injustices that

occurred at Indigenous boarding schools from the point of view of a young Indigenous girl (Walley-Beckett, 2017).

As a show that centers around the characters created by L.M. Montgomery in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the central storylines of *Anne with an E* still predominantly focused on struggles faced by white, middle class, able-bodied, Christian characters (Hnatow, 2020). Anne of *Anne with an E* embodies third-wave feminism by challenging sexist, homophobic, and racist comments and actions and embracing individual choice (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). Similar to the assertion that third-wave feminists are media savvy and often create their own media, Anne creates a feminist manifesto in the school newspaper in season three. Sowards and Renegar (2006) argue that, although the most common conceptions of activism relate to social organization and public protest, everyday actions meant to uplift women are powerful tools for feminist activism. Through Anne, many of the supporting characters also grow to accept similar views regarding gender equity (Walley-Beckett, 2017).

Anne titles her feminist manifesto “What is Fair” (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). This is a sentiment that was carried over to the fan campaign, even being mentioned on one of the billboards. This was only one of many ways the billboards served as a homage to *Anne with an E* (Anne Nation, 2020). In doing so, they infused the campaign with many of the same values as the show. I now turn to Chapter Three, where I outline and justify the use of metaphorical criticism and fantasy-theme analysis as a means of analyzing the messages and rhetorical vision created through the fan-based, feminist campaign.

## RHETORICAL METHODS

In this analysis, I analyze billboards created by *Anne with an E* fans in their campaign to save the show from cancellation through the rhetorical method of visual analysis. To conduct my analysis, I utilize the theoretical frameworks of metaphorical criticism (Osborn, 2018) and fantasy-theme analysis (Bormann, 1972) to place the campaign within the intersection of fan activism and feminist protest. I focus on the billboards published by fans on the official website for the campaign (Anne Nation, 2020). Based on this information, I access high quality copies of each of these billboards from a Google image search. I use the standard steps for visual rhetorical analysis outlined by Foss (2018) to conduct the analysis. The explanations I give in this chapter for the lenses I have chosen will provide the foundation to conduct my rhetorical analysis of this fan-based campaign in Chapter Four.

In season three of *Anne with an E*, Anne and her classmates protest sexual assault and censorship by demonstrating at a town council meeting (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). Fan art on the billboards showed Anne in different states of protest from throughout this storyline. Quotes from these episodes (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a) were reframed in billboard taglines to call fans to take action (Anne Nation, 2020). I have chosen the lens of metaphorical criticism (Osborn, 2018) as a means of analyzing how these symbols from the show were used to create a rhetorical message about the efforts of the campaign. I have chosen the lens of fantasy-theme analysis (Bormann, 1972) to analyze how these billboards were used to create a new rhetorical vision about the representation of feminism and social issues that were parallel to the show. Because the analysis of this

show relies heavily on an understanding of the *Anne with an E* show storyline, I analyze the billboards in conversation with the three episodes most heavily referenced in the billboards (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a). I obtain the episodes from Netflix.

### **Visual Rhetorical Analysis**

Rhetoric can be defined as the practice and theory of creating symbolic persuasive actions (Burke, 1969). When situated in specific historical times, places, and contexts, rhetors create the agency over their audience. In other words, they use rhetorical messages to gain recognition from a community (Campbell, 2005). Rhetoric addresses the public through production, circulation, apprehension, reception, and consumption (Benson & Frandsen, 1982). Visual rhetoric is the study of persuasive messages that have been enacted primarily through visuals. The visual artifact may come in the form of a news photograph, a memorial, a documentary, a protest, or any other artifact that requires viewing from the audience (Olson et al., 2008). The elements that a rhetor might identify as being persuasive to the public are shaped by a variety of contexts, including photographic conventions, fashion, hairstyles, political debates, or social myths (Benson & Frandsen, 1982).

Olson et al., (2008) determined three assumptions of visual rhetoric. First, visual rhetoric does not require the abandonment of other forms of rhetoric. Instead, text found within a visual can be an important element to include in a visual rhetoric analysis (Olson et al., 2008). Second, visual analysis should not be considered a supplement to textual rhetorical analysis. Visuals are integral to the creation of a rhetorical message and should be thought of as such (Gronbeck, 2008). Finally, visual rhetorical analysis should be



considered with the conceptual resources of the rhetorical tradition. These resources are referred to as “rhetorical consciousness”. By including the rhetorical consciousness as part of a visual rhetorical analysis, the rhetorician acknowledges that persuasive communication is reliant on context and on the agents who crafted the message (Gronbeck, 2008).

Olson et al, (2008) argued that visuals rhetoric is important because visuals are a significant influence in the creation of symbols. The study of visual rhetoric educates the public to separate commercial from civic, the propagandic from the democratic, and the sentimental from the memorable. A greater knowledge of the processes will lead to greater involvement in the processes of government and community (Olson et al., 2008). The study of visual rhetoric is an important part of these processes as visuals become an ever-increasing part of communication, a trend that will likely continue to grow in the future as society becomes more and more accustomed to the use of technological avenues of communication (Olson et al., 2008).

### **Metaphorical Criticism**

Scholars of public discourse originally defined metaphor by its linguistic form, relating the action of creating metaphors to the process of using one name to refer to something with a completely different literal meaning (Osborn, 2018). In his analysis of the term, Osborn (2018) chose to expand the definition to include the psychological nature of the form. He defined metaphor as a combination of communicative stimulus and mental response. The stimulus is the identification of an object through a sign that would not otherwise be ascribed to that object. The mental response is an acknowledgement that there is a literal and nonliteral definition, of which the nonliteral is

meant (Osborn, 2018). In using a metaphor, one carries a tangible object into an intangible realm. Metaphors have the potential to completely change the way that an audience perceives an object. The original tangible object may cease to be defined by its literal definition and instead be most recognized by the intangible definition (Burke, 1941). For example, with hourglasses no longer a household item, the image of an hourglass is mainly used to evoke the metaphor of time passing.

In rhetorical study, terminology for the creation of a metaphor includes the terms tenor and vehicle, which were defined by Richards (1965) as part of the tenor-vehicle model of metaphor. Richards (1965) defined the vehicle as the action of placing a description of one subject onto a seemingly different subject, while the tenor is the subject that the vehicle acts upon. In the example “The girl was a night owl”, the world is the object being explained and the stage is the symbolic lens being applied to the object (Tronstad, 1987). When using the terms set forth by Richards (1965), “girl” is the tenor and “night owl” is the vehicle.

Osborn (2018) outlines seven types of qualifiers that make the connection between the tenor and vehicle understandable to the audience. These seven types of qualifiers include perceptual qualifiers, presentational qualifiers, situational qualifiers, contextual qualifiers, communal qualifiers, archetypal qualifiers, and private qualifiers (Osborn, 2018). For the purpose of this study, I will outline four of the qualifiers, including presentational, situational, contextual and communal. Presentational qualifiers relate to similarities in the actions of the tenor and vehicle. Situational qualifiers relate to similarities between the situation surrounding the tenor and that surrounding the vehicle, while a contextual qualifier is a metaphor that only applies to the vehicle in specific

situations. Finally, communal qualifiers are created through a cultural knowledge that connects the vehicle and the tenor and understood by those in that culture (Osborn, 2018).

A presentational qualifier would relate to a person being called a lion because they have a loud, roaring voice. A situational qualifier would be used if one was to say that there was a “new dawn” in reference to a new beginning and a contextual qualifier would be evoked if someone is referred to as a lion in combat (Osborn, 2018).

Meanwhile, an example of a communal qualifier would be the western practice of using the color white to signify purity, a color that holds in different meaning in certain other countries (Lewis, 2015).

Ivie (1987) outlined the process of conducting a metaphoric analysis. Once the critic has familiarized themselves with the context surrounding the topic of their analysis and chosen the specific artifacts, they find most relevant to the research questions, they can begin to locate the metaphors within the artifact (Ivie, 1987). For example, when analyzing the phrase “all the world’s a stage, and we are merely players”, a rhetorician might begin by familiarizing themselves with the play in which the phrase appears. Ivie (1987) states that the next step is to uncover the metaphors in the artifact and decipher the vehicles associated with them. In the example, the two metaphors are “the world is a stage” and “we are merely players”. In the first metaphor “world” is the metaphor and “stage” is the vehicle. In the second metaphor, “we” is the tenor and “players” is the vehicle.

These vehicles should then be organized into subgroups based on their similarities. The critic contextualizes each vehicle within the cluster to determine variance in terms of how each metaphor was created (Ivie, 1987). The rhetorician may

decide that “stage” is a situational qualifier and that “player” is a presentational qualifier and category both as such. The final step in the process of conducting a metaphoric analysis is to analyze the similarities between the clusters to reveal the rhetor's metaphorical system. These patterns allow the critic to draw conclusions about the speaker's rhetorical invention, or available rhetorical resources in crafting a persuasive message (Ivie, 1987). The rhetorician may conclude that the rhetorical message of “all the world's a stage and we are merely players” is that all people present themselves in a certain manner when they are out in the world to be viewed by others.

### ***Justification for the use of metaphoric criticism***

Janusz (1994) argued that metaphor is a powerful force in feminism. While metaphor has been used in the creation of unkind messages about women, feminist have also used metaphors to create positive messages about women (Janusz, 1994). One of the most debated metaphors has been the overarching metaphor of “waves” to delineate between the different generations of feminist activists. Scholars have found issue with the image of each generation of feminist moving in a single movement such as a wave in the ocean, because it overlooks the deviation in the motivations and actions of different feminists from each era, yet they have also acknowledged the merits of this metaphor as a linguistic signifier of feminism that has served a purpose in the creation of identity for feminists (Dean & Aune, 2015; Evans & Chamberlin, 2015; Helmreich, 2017).

Application of metaphorical criticism and to study feminist rhetorical messages have included the study of Disney princesses (Farris, 2020), celebrity activism (Batterson, 2016), the rhetoric of women involved with politics (Dosterglick, 2022; Puls, 2014), and

the rhetoric used to describe women in politics (Anderson, 2002. Edwards & McDonald, 2010).

Metaphors were a significant rhetorical device used by both the creators of *Anne with an E* and later the fandom during the creation of their fan campaign. The metaphors that existed within *Anne with an E* could be found through the use of an established story as a vehicle for discussions about contemporary social issues (Walley-Beckett, 2017). In contrast, the most prominent uses of metaphor in the fan campaign could be found within the billboard, with fan art that depicted Anne in different states of protest from throughout this storyline. Quotes from these storylines (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a) became textual metaphors for the actions of fans in the campaign (Tapia, 2019; Mia, 2019; Emeri, 2019; Anne Nation, 2020). Within my analysis of the campaign, I analyze the use of metaphors in these episodes and the fan-created billboards to determine the rhetorical invention of fans, who served as the rhetors, within this “save our show” campaign.

### **Fantasy-Theme Criticism**

The development of fantasy-theme criticism came from the work of Robert Bales and his associates in their study of communication in small groups. Bales discovered the process of group fantasizing or dramatizing as a type of communication that sometimes occurs in such groups (Bormann, 1972). Bormann (1972) further developed this insight in his creation of the symbolic convergence theory and the method of fantasy-theme analysis. Fantasy-theme analysis is best used to analyze the shared view of reality experienced by rhetorical communities. Shared reality is created through the rhetorical message and can be directly linked to the group’s perception of the heroes, villains,

plotlines, scenic description, and sanctioning agents in their reality (Shields & Preston, 1985).

Shields and Preston (1985) outlined three evaluation concepts that include rhetorical community, reality link to here-and-now phenomena, and dramatistic rhetorical strategy. They defined a rhetorical community as the group of people participating in the shared fantasy. A rhetorical community may have a shorthand they use that strengthens their connection as a group (Shield & Preston, 1985). For example, the colors associated with a specific school cause students to feel like a united group. Reality links to the here-and-now relate to the ability of the community to make the rhetorical vision more believable and acceptable, thus making it more worthwhile to potential participants in the vision. When a rhetorical vision lacks reality links to the here-and-now, outsiders are more likely to label the rhetorical community as “cult” (Shield & Preston, 1985). For example, a rhetorical community of fangirls would feel their love of a certain star or television show is worthwhile because it resonates with their views and experiences. However, society views their rhetorical vision as cult-like because their interests are not valued by the larger society (Gerrard, 2022).

The first step in applying fantasy-theme analysis is to code the artifact by identifying the setting, characters, and actions. To do so, one must make inferences based on what they find in the artifact. The category that different elements will fit into differ depending on how the rhetorician interprets their contribution to the rhetorical vision (Shields & Preston, 1985). Foss (2018) gives the example of America to illustrate the multidimensional nature of elements. At the most basic level, America is a setting.

However, when certain characteristics are ascribed to the place, such as characteristics of freedom and bravery, it becomes a character (Foss, 2018).

In addition to setting, characters, and actions, a sanctioning agent may be present as part of the rhetorical vision. This is a person that serves as an authority of the vision, justifying it to others (Shield & Preston, 1985). In the example of America and the national anthem, the singer can be considered the sanctioning agent because they are leading the shared vision with their singing. Once these elements have been identified, the next step is to look for patterns within the coding. This can be achieved by linking the elements that were found to be the most prominent when coding the artifact. Combined, these elements discern the worldview shared by the group. From this worldview, the rhetorical vision is also concluded (Bormann, 1972). When an American audience listens to their national anthem, they may participate in a rhetorical vision of national pride.

#### ***Justification for use of fantasy-theme analysis***

Borman (1972) suggested the application of fantasy-theme analysis for the study of social movement rhetoric. He uses the preaching of Puritan ministers as an example of how the fantasy themes found in religious rhetoric can lead members of a religion to participate in unified actions. In the case of Puritans, the Biblical stories of Jews who journeyed from Egypt to Canaan led members of the community to participate in a shared fantasy that they were creating a model religious community by conquering new land and saving the souls of native citizens (Bormann, 1972). Shields & Preston (1985) further asserted the appropriateness for the application of fantasy-theme analysis with an example of The Clamshell Alliance Movement. Application of fantasy-theme analysis has included studies of the effectiveness movement of Stephen Covey (Jackson, 1996;

1999), the Radical Environmentalist Movement (Baldo, 2010), and the Sri Lanka's Tamil separatist movement (Prentice & Boange, 2011). Studies of online social movement organization have utilized fantasy-theme analysis and have focused on the United States militia movement (Meador, 1996) and online hate groups (Duffy, 2003).

Through the use of Bormann (1972)'s fantasy-theme analysis as a theoretical lens, I hope to extend existing literature regarding the shared worldview of social movements to include the rhetoric of fan-based social movements. *Anne with an E* is a compelling example of the use of fantasy chains to develop a unified movement. Bormann (1972) conceptualized fantasy chains as the process by which fantasies are built upon one another in a manner that keeps the rhetorical vision from ending. *Anne with an E* began a fantasy chain with the use of turn of the century storylines as metaphors for contemporary feminist issues (Walley-Beckett, 2017). This fantasy chain was carried over into the rhetoric of the fan campaign, with the shared fantasy surrounding a protest leading fans to participate in their own unified fantasy (Anne Nation, 2020). Within my analysis of the campaign, I isolate the fantasy-themes that emerge from these fantasy chains to determine the rhetorical vision of the campaign.

### **Justification of Billboards as the Artifact for Rhetorical Analysis**

Strategies used by *Anne with an E* fans in their campaign included posting on social media, letter writing, commenting on news channels, and the creation of billboards (Cecco, 2020). I have chosen the billboards as the central artifacts for this rhetorical analysis. I argue that through the fan-created billboards, this study contributes to the existing literature on persuasive public discourse, and particularly the power of visuals. The billboards contained visual rhetoric and metaphors that positioned the campaign at



the intersection of protest rhetoric and feminist rhetoric. The billboards also bridged the gap between the efforts of the characters in the show and the fan activists. Whereas the billboards visually and textually reference storylines from *Anne with an E* (Anne Nation, 2020), those storylines themselves can be considered metaphors for contemporary feminist issues. To fully understand how these episodes connect to the billboards, I analyze the billboards in conversation with the three episodes most heavily referenced in the billboards (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a).

Furthermore, I justify my choice of the fan-created billboards instead of other fan-created material for the campaign because of their representation of the overall rhetorical message of the campaign. Whereas social media posts, letter-writing, and comments largely indicated the individual opinions of individual stakeholders within the fandom (Cecco, 2020), the billboards bring together the efforts of these different subgroups of stakeholders. The fandom as a whole rallied together to fund the billboards, and the administrators of @awaefanprojects hosted the fundraiser to pay for the billboards and arranged their design and display (Anne Nation, 2020). Fan artists who had originally created the art for their personal social media accounts agreed to have their art on the billboards, making them part of the visual rhetoric of the billboards (Tapia, 2020; Uffizi, 2020).

## RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

The character of Anne Shirley-Cuthbert creates a feminist rhetorical vision of “fighting for what is right” by making their voice heard within the storyline of episodes six, seven, and eight of the third season of *Anne with an E*. This rhetorical vision is further punctuated by the use of metaphors to connect the storyline to current issues faced by women. The rhetorical vision that originated with Anne is furthered by the fans behind the campaign in their billboards as they represent their campaign as “fighting for what is right” by making their voices heard. Their method of representing this rhetorical vision includes use of the storyline as metaphors for their efforts.

In the previous chapter, I outlined the rhetorical lenses that I use in this chapter to analyze the episodes of *Anne with an E* and the billboards that were created to save the show from cancellation. These theoretical lenses include metaphoric criticism (Osborn, 2018) and fantasy-theme criticism (Bormann, 1972). Through textual and visual rhetorical analysis, I use the tenets of fantasy-theme criticism to structure this chapter. I bring in metaphoric analysis in connecting the fantasy themes of the billboards and the larger fan campaign to important social issues emphasized through the billboards and featured in the selected three episodes of the show.

I first use fantasy theme analysis (Bormann, 1972) and metaphoric criticism (Osborn, 2018) to explore the characters, setting, and action in the three episodes of the show. Then I turn to using fantasy theme analysis (Bormann, 1972) and metaphoric criticism (Osborn, 2018) to analyze the characters, setting, and action in the billboards of the campaign. I bring these components together and conclude with describing the overarching rhetorical vision of the fan-based campaign to save *Anne with an E*.

### **Rhetorical and Visual Analysis of Selected Episodes of *Anne with an E***

In this section, I analyze the metaphors and fantasy themes used in episodes six, seven, and eight of the third season of *Anne with an E*. These specific episodes represent the shift of the students transitioning from being girls and boys into women and men. The transition requires them to evaluate their place within the gender expectations of a patriarchal society. These episodes were chosen because they were directly referenced in the fan-based campaign's billboards to save the show. Secondly, the episodes also focus on protest, agency, and the importance of women's rights, which are salient and directly referenced in the fan-based campaign.

#### ***Characters in Anne with an E***

Anne Shirley-Cuthbert is the main character of *Anne with an E* (Walley-Beckett, 2017) and the only character from the show to visually appear on the fan-based campaign's billboards that I analyze. Prior to the events of the series, Anne had been in and out of different orphanages and foster homes. The caregivers in each of these places had been abusive to her (Walley-Beckett, 2017). At the beginning of the first season, she is adopted by an elderly brother and sister named Matthew and Marilla, who give her the first secure and loving home she has had since her parents' death. They refer to the farm they live on as Green Gables (Walley-Beckett & Caro, 2017), leading to the title *Anne of Green Gables* for the source material for the television show (Montgomery, 1908).

Matthew and Marilla had initially sent word to the orphanage that they wanted to adopt a boy to help Matthew with farm work. However, miscommunication leads to Anne being sent instead (Walley-Beckett & Caro, 2017). After some deliberation, they decide to adopt Anne anyway (Walley-Beckett & Caro, 2017; Walley-Beckett & Sharva,

2017). Marilla has a stern attitude that influences the way that she parents Anne, discouraging Anne from pursuing interests Marilla sees as frivolous, such as keeping up with the current fashion trends. Matthew differs in his approach, often finding ways to make Anne's wishes possible. He indulges Anne's "frivolous" interests by buying her a dress she wanted with puffed sleeves (Walley-Beckett & Rozema, 2017). Although immensely important to the series, Matthew does not have a significant role in the storyline referenced in the *Anne with an E* fan-based campaign billboards. In the seventh episode of season three, he lets Anne and Marilla know that he intends to stay out of the conversation because they do not need another man lending his opinion on the issue (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019).

As time goes on, Marilla softens in her expectations of Anne. By the third season, Marilla has embraced the mentality that she will support Anne in her actions and beliefs (Walley-Beckett, 2017). She is an important ally of Anne's during the protest storyline (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a). The way that Anne and Marilla support each other despite their differing views of femininity represents the value of solidarity that can exist between different generations of feminists. The value of solidarity was defined as a scholarly principle by Hooks (1986), who viewed feminist solidarity as the ability for women to support one another across the boundaries of race, class, and sexuality. A feminist shows their value of solidarity when they struggle to understand differences and change misguided perceptions (Hooks, 1986). Marilla and Anne both embody the feminist values of solidarity by supporting other women in their individual expression and fight for equality, despite having differing views on how women should look and act.

The storyline of the chosen episodes further shows Anne's strong belief in the feminist value of solidarity (Hooks, 1986) when she sticks up for Josie Pye, someone who has treated her poorly in the past. Josie is one of the Avonlea school bullies. She views herself as having higher status than Anne and has taken measures to convince the other girls in school that Anne is unworthy of respect (Walley-Beckett, 2017). During the third season, Josie is being courted by a boy named Billy Andrews, who is another one of Anne's bullies. The courtship leads Josie to separate herself from the other schoolgirls, as she feels she is more grown up than them. Billy shows less interest in his courtship with Josie Pye but is interested in the attention he receives from her (Walley-Beckett, 2017). Anne realizes that Billy has physically forced himself on Josie in the sixth episode of season three, when they momentarily leave a dance and Josie returns looking visibly distraught and disheveled. Billy then boasts to his friends that Josie had been the one interested in him. Anne confronts him in the middle of the dance. There is no accountability for Billy from this interaction, but Anne becomes very concerned with communicating her belief that Billy forcing himself upon Josie was wrong (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019).

Anne's characterization makes her a metaphor for third wave feminism. To explain the inner workings of this metaphor, I first redefine three important terms. These terms are tenor, vehicle, and qualifier. The vehicle is the object that has figurative characters attributed to it. The tenor is the symbols that are being attributed to the vehicle as a means of making a point about their figurative similarities (Richards, 1965). A qualifier is the type of similarities that are evoked to create a rhetorical message about the

vehicle. A qualifier can be connected to similarities in appearance, action, setting, or context (Osborn, 2018).

Anne is the vehicle (Richards, 1965) of the metaphor because she is the one who represents something she is not. Because *Anne with an E* is set during the 1890s, Anne is living within the time period of first wave feminism (Hewitt, 2010; Walley-Beckett, 2017). Yet Anne's actions align more with third wave feminism, which is the wave that correlates with the time period in which the show was made (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000; Walley-Beckett, 2017). Therefore, the tenor (Richards, 1965) is third wave feminism. This metaphor has a presentational qualifier (Osborn, 2018). Presentational qualifiers create a connection between the vehicle and the tenor by evoking similarities in actions (Osborn, 2018).

As mentioned in chapter one and two, major foci of third-wave feminism were challenging sexist, homophobic, and racist comments and actions, embracing individual choice, and being media savvy (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). Meanwhile, first wave feminists were most concerned with giving women the right to vote, greater civic responsibility, and the ability to own property (Hewitt, 2010). Anne exhibits the qualities of a first wave feminist in that she is concerned with the legal and civic rights of women. Yet she goes beyond the actions of the first wave and into the territory of third-wave feminism by challenging sexist comments and embracing individual choice and agency (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a). I further explain the utilization of this metaphor throughout the rest of the chapter.

Anne's strong will causes her to clash with many of the townspeople as she challenges many of their traditional views. Oftentimes she believes she is acting in the best interest of another person, only to discover in the aftermath that she has made matters more difficult for them. Anne redeems herself following these actions when her selfless acts help others (Walley-Beckett, 2017). An example of this is when Anne invites her best friend, Diana, over for tea and accidentally serves her alcohol from a bottle she believed to contain raspberry cordial. Diana's mother punishes them by saying that they can no longer be friends (Walley-Beckett & Rozema, 2017). In this storyline, Anne is able to redeem herself when Diana's sister becomes severely ill, and Anne is the only one who can cure her (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2017).

Anne's experiences as an orphan leads her to struggle with self-confidence. Flashbacks of her past are utilized throughout the series to represent Anne's battle with post-traumatic stress disorder and reveal that she was emotionally and physically abused by her foster parents and severely bullied by the other children in the orphanage (Walley-Beckett, 2017). She often fantasizes about her ideal world to cope with her trauma. At first, these fantasies relate to surface level desires, such as her desire to have raven black hair and be named Cordelia (Walley-Beckett, 2017). However, as she grows older, her wishes for the world to be a better place go from being fantasies to inspiring outward actions. Anne becomes more concerned with activism. By the third season, Anne has acclimated to the town and is considered a part of the social group in her school. Anne is one of the reporters with the school newspaper, which is one of the channels for her activism (Walley-Beckett, 2017).

The school newspaper staff is made up of students from the school and overseen by their schoolteacher, Miss Stacy (Walley-Beckett, 2017). Miss Stacy came to Avonlea in season two when she took over as the teacher at the one room schoolhouse. She quickly became an influential woman in the formation of Anne's feminist worldview due to her representation of the feminist value of personal autonomy (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2018-a; Offen, 1988). Miss Stacy's untraditional ways cause friction between her and the townspeople almost immediately, with her choices to drive a motorbike and not wear a corset being points of contention (See Figures 12 and 13; Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2018-a). At the same time, these choices cause Anne, who had also been heavily criticized by the townspeople, to feel more secure in her self-identity (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2018-b).



Figure 12. Left. Miss Stacy's corset. Miss Stacy considers wearing her corset, before deciding against it (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019-a).

Figure 13. Right. Miss Stacy rides motorbike. Miss Stacy rides her motorbike to a meeting during the first time that Anne encounters her (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019-a).

As both the teacher of the one room schoolhouse and the supervisor for the school newspaper, Miss Stacy bridges the gap between the efforts of the teenage characters and the expectations of the adult characters. When Anne secretly adds an editorial about feminism to the school newspaper, Miss Stacy agrees with Anne's sentiment but is placed in a position where she must contend with the ways they go against the interests of other



people (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). Miss Stacy supports the other students working on the newspaper as they express their anger at Anne for not following the proper protocol for publishing an editorial. As they work through their anger, Miss Stacy stays neutral and attempts to validate the feelings on all sides while still holding Anne accountable for her actions. When Anne and the other students come to an agreement, Miss Stacy takes an active role in staging and documenting their protest (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019).

Of the other students, the most significant to Anne's storyline is Gilbert Blythe. Anne views Gilbert as a rival through much of the series due to her embarrassment of him flirting with her in front of the school following their first meeting. They are often competing for the top marks in their classes. During the third season, they transition from being rivals and friends to potential love interests (Walley-Beckett, 2017). Gilbert also has a secondary love interest, named Winifred, who is introduced during the third season. Anne's jealousy of Winifred leads her to rebuke Gilbert's attempts to act as an ally during her efforts to protest sexism. Yet Gilbert ends up creating an important influence in Anne's cause by convincing the other students that her arguments were made using sound reasoning (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019).

Gilbert's willingness to support Anne and Josie in their fight for equality represents the ability that men have to uplift women. Gilbert, along with Matthew, represents the third-wave feminist value of solidarity (hooks, 1986) and individual choice (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000) by supporting Anne in her desire to express her individuality. They individually challenge the ideology of the patriarchy (Lerner, 1986) by uplifting the voices of Anne and other females rather than overshadowing their narrative with their voices as cisgendered, white males. Matthew does so by choosing to

stay silent to give women room to speak, and Gilbert does so by using his platform to amplify Anne's words (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). These actions show that those who have historically been given a voice can subvert the patriarchy in ways that support women.

A second group that is important to Anne's storyline is the school board. The majority of the school board is made up of older white men (See Figure 14). They are willing to make small changes, such as allowing the school to have a printing press for their newspaper. However, they also want to prevent the town from progressing in ways that would go against their conservative beliefs (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). The show emphasizes the fact that the female characters are living in a society in which men control their freedom by representing the school board as a metaphor for the patriarchy (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a). The patriarchy is the institutionalization of male dominance over women and children within the home and extending to society in general (Lerner, 1986).



Figure 14. School board. The men on the school board during a school board meeting (Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a)

The men on the school board show their patriarchal beliefs by attempting to censor the students working on the school newspaper from publishing an article discussing gender issues and by silencing Rachel Lynde, their only female board

member's voice during their meetings. This is shown when Rachel disagrees with the belief that they should punish the students by taking away their printing press, and the men refuse to let her explain her proposal for how they should respond (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). Rachel likely got her position on the board because of her considerable influence in Avonlea. She is an elderly woman who tends to speak her mind and often tries to help others by meddling in their lives. While Rachel and Anne clash at first, they later become allies (Walley-Beckett, 2017).

Within the metaphor for of the school board representing the patriarchy, the school board is the entity that is having metaphoric terms attributed to it. Therefore, the school board is the vehicle (Richards, 1965). The tenor (Richards, 1965) is patriarchy because the oppressive characteristics of the patriarchy are being attributed to them. This metaphor has a presentational qualifier (Osborn, 2018) because the school board and the patriarchy are connected through the similarities in their actions. Just as the patriarchy oppresses women and children by enforcing male dominance (Lerner, 1986), the school board oppresses the women and children of Avonlea by controlling their ability to advocate for gendered issues (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019).

### ***Setting in Anne with an E.***

The show takes place in the fictional farming town of Avonlea, Nova Scotia. During the protest storyline, Anne and Miss Stacy have a conversation in which they go deeper into how the culture of Avonlea affects progress. Miss Stacy tells Anne that had they been in an area with more progressive thinkers, her editorial would have been very thought-provoking and might have sparked discussions about social change. However, because the culture in Avonlea is conservative, people in the area were unwilling to have

such discussions (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). Their conversation sums up how the more progressive minds of Anne and Miss Stacy are at odds with the culture and society in which they live (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019).

Two locations in Avonlea that are integral to the protest storyline are the schoolhouse and the town meeting hall (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). The building consists of one large room, an entryway, and a closet (the latter of which acts as the private space for Anne and Ms. Stacy's conversation mentioned in the previous paragraph). The large room has a chalkboard at the front, desks of differing sizes to accommodate students of differing ages, and a stove. A printing press is added to the room in the third season when Miss Stacy and the older students create a school newspaper. They routinely meet at the schoolhouse during non-school hours to work on the newspaper (Walley-Beckett, 2017).



Figure 15. Left. Exterior of schoolhouse. The Avonlea schoolhouse as it appears from the outside (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019)

Figure 16. Right. Interior of schoolhouse. The Avonlea schoolhouse as it appears from the inside (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2018-a).

In contrast, the town meeting hall is the location where special events, such as town meetings and school plays, have been held throughout the events of the show. The portion of it that is seen by the audience is a large room with double doors. The large space leaves room for chairs or tables to be put out as needed for various occasions

(Walley-Beckett, 2017). The hall also includes a stage with curtains that are drawn shut when not being used. The school board holds their meetings in this room. Because of this, when the students chose to hold a protest with the school board as the audience, they did so at the town meeting hall (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019).

The setting is also heavily influenced by the standards of western society in the 1890s, the time period in which it is set (Walley-Beckett, 2017). Most notably in this story, the rights of women and girls on the verge of womanhood are put into question several times throughout the storyline (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a). An example of this standard is that the sexual assault that occurred in the story is treated as the fault of the victim with no accountability for the person who assaulted her. This attack then causes the victim to be viewed as someone with a soiled reputation. This becomes an extra burden for her and her family because she needs to secure a good match to ensure she will have good financial and social standing (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a).

Legal and civic rights for women were concerns that were being addressed in Prince Edward Island and the Canadian territory of Nova Scotia during the 1890s. During the decade, policies were changed that allowed women to own property if they were widowed, unmarried, or had husbands who were disqualified from owning property (The Nellie McClung Foundation, n.d.). Married women living in Prince Edward Island would not be granted the same legal capacity for owning property as their husbands until 1903 (The Nellie McClung Foundation, n.d.). Although laws have been changed to allow women rights to own property and participate in civic activities, sexual assault and

personal autonomy are topics still being discussed by third-wave feminists (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). These topics came further to the forefront of society during the production of the show, as the 2017 Women's March that took place (Women's March, n.d.) and widespread attention of the #MeToo movement (Pflum, 2018) became channels meant to spread awareness and increase accountability in the matter of sexual assault.

Furthermore, for someone such as Anne, who has the opinions and values of a third-wave feminist, being controlled by a governing body of patriarchal men from the 1890s would feel acutely restricting. This constitutes a metaphor for the way that many American third-wave feminists felt about their government during the production of the show. The inauguration of Donald Trump as the President of the United States in January 2017 (Women's March, n.d.) occurred only a couple months before the first episode of *Anne with an E* aired (Anne with an E Wiki, n.d.). His presidency was protested by American feminists (Women's March, n.d.) who channeled the fears of losing their rights into civic action (Chira, 2020). Based on this knowledge, it is not hard to understand why the struggles depicted in the show garnered universal sympathy in viewers beyond the Canadian borders and setting.

The perceived similarities in the circumstances of women during the 1890s and the circumstances of women in the late 2010s creates a metaphor for the oppression of third-wave feminists. Anne and her peers are trying to make the same type of changes for women and girls that feminists are trying to make more than one hundred years later. Just as Anne is met with opposition that prevents her from making the desired change (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a), third-wave feminists struggle to make change because those with the most power have upheld patriarchal

systems (Pflum, 2018; Chira, 2020). The vehicle (Richards, 1965) of this metaphor is the time period of the late 2010s, while the tenor (Richards, 1965) is the time period of the 1890s. They are connected through a situational qualifier, which is a type of qualifier that occurs when situations of the two share commonalities (Osborn, 2018). For this metaphor, themes of the 2010s are being attributed to the 1890s as a way for audiences to make sense of a lack of social progress.

### *Action in Anne with an E*

The action of the episodes in the show shapes the fan-based campaign and their sense of rhetorical community that values feminist personal agency and the ability to change society. The protest storyline begins three quarters of the way through the sixth episode of season three. Anne, her classmates, and many others from Avonlea are attending a barn dance at the county fair (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019). The actions in these scenes establish one of the main conflicts of the storyline. Anne believes in the feminist value of individual choice and bodily autonomy, meaning that she believes people should have the ability to make decisions about their own body (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). Anne is confronted by the fact that the patriarchal society she lives in places their belief in men over the consideration of individual choice and autonomy for the girls and women that they interact with (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019).

In between dances, Billy Andrews and Josie Pye meet outside. Billy tells Josie that he has told his father that he would like to marry her regardless of money, and they kiss. However, when Josie wants to go back to the dance rather than having sex, Billy forces himself on her (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019). Following a struggle, Josie is able to get away from Billy and return to the barn dance. He calls after her that she

should have known he wanted to do more than talk when he asked her to come outside (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019). Josie rejoins the other girls, and Anne notices that her hair and dress are disheveled, so she helps her to straighten them up. Anne joins the next dance while Josie stands on the sidelines with a distraught expression (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019).

Anne overhears the boys from school whispering to their dancing partners that Josie had made sexual advances on Billy. She breaks free from the dance to go ask Josie if she is okay. Josie tells Anne that she is alright, but Josie's expression leads Anne to understand what happened (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019). Anne crosses the dance floor to confront Billy. She tells him that she can tell the rumors are not true and that he inappropriately touched Josie. By this time, everyone in the dance is watching their interaction. Billy says that Josie should have thought of this before she had loose morals. At this point, Josie runs out of the barn, and Billy walks away from Anne (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019).

The next day at the schoolhouse, Anne defends Josie as the other girls argue against her right to autonomy. The other girls argue that Josie should not be given the right to personal autonomy by saying that the sexual assault was alright because Josie and Billy were engaged; they call Josie ill-bred (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019). Anne's best friend, Diana, is the only one who supports Anne's side. She uses the third-wave feminist term consent (Halley, 2016) to describe her view of when it is appropriate to touch another person (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019).

The other girls continue to blame Josie for what happened. Anne yells out that Josie's reputation is ruined and questions why it is not Billy who has the ruined



reputation. Just as she is saying this, Gilbert comes over to tell them it's time to start work on the next edition of the newspaper. Anne reacts by loudly questioning him on whether it is more important to talk about who had the biggest cabbage at the fair or issues that affect an entire gender (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019). Her words show that she possesses the feminist belief in questioning societal norms and in the importance of media in transmitting ideas, a value that will drive the story (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). The others seem unsure of how to respond to this outburst, and all get to work on their respective assignments for the newspaper (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019).

The next scene takes place in the schoolhouse, late at night. Anne is using the Printing press alone and in the dark. She holds up a paper that she has printed on and then the scene fades to the credits (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019). The next episode begins with Anne running to the church in the middle of the night with a stack of newspapers. She leaves the stack of newspapers on the steps of the church before going home (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). When she gets to the top of the stairs, Marilla comes out of her bedroom to see what the noise is. They briefly discuss Anne working late on the newspaper before they both go to their bedrooms (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019).

The next morning, while Anne sleeps, Marilla attends church. As the parishioners enter the building, they pick up copies of the newspaper Anne left on the steps. People read the newspaper as they wait for church to begin. As they do so, whispering begins. Marilla reads the paper to figure out what they are whispering about (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019).

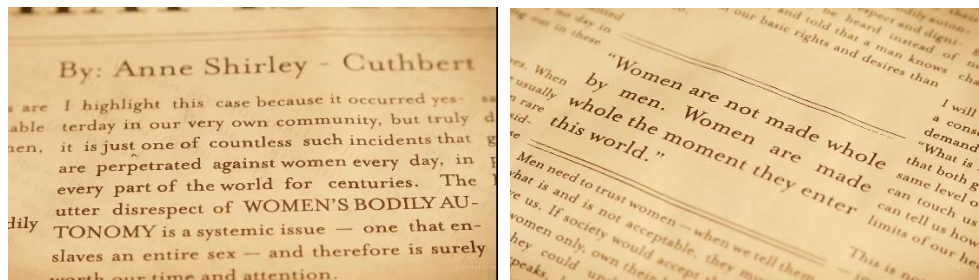


Figure 17. Left. By Anne Shirley-Cuthbert. A close-up shot of the beginning of Anne's editorial (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019)

Figure 18. Right. Women are not made whole by men. A close-up shot of a pull quote from Anne's editorial (Walley-Beckett, 2019)

The camera focuses on an editorial written by Anne (See Figure 17 and 18). In the editorial, she writes about the lack of bodily autonomy that women have and the need to change what she refers to as archaic rules. She also writes that a sexual assault occurred in their community that week (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). Although Anne does not mention in the editorial who experienced the assault, Josie Pye looks visibly distraught and then runs out of the church. Miss Stacy asks Gilbert Blythe why no one questioned Anne's article before it was printed. Gilbert says that none of them knew she had written the article (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019).

With her choice to publish the editorial, Anne emphasizes the actions of a third-wave feminist by using media to discuss feminism. Use of media to voice values that challenge prejudice has become a significant part of third-wave feminism (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000), as current third-wave feminists have had social media available in ways that were not possible for past generations of feminists. This has been especially true for teenage girls, because the internet has allowed them the capacity to mobilize on their own (Keller, 2019). As a teenager living during the first wave of feminism, Anne does not have the luxury of going to her computer and posting a message that people

around the world can read. However, her actions mimic these abilities when she, as the vehicle (Richards, 1965), uses the media available to her to have her values heard by others without looking to others for guidance. This action, as a representation of third wave feminism, is the metaphor's tenor (Richards, 1965). Once again, this metaphor has a presentational qualifier (Osborn, 2018) because Anne's actions are those of third wave feminism even though Anne is living within the time period of first wave feminism.

Following the outburst at the church, Josie's mother comforts Josie as she cries in her bed. The audience learns that her parents do not value individual choice (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000) and enforce patriarchal expectations (Lerner, 1986) on Josie. Her father tells them that it is important that they maintain the agreement that Billy and Josie are courting. He plans to go talk to Billy's father. Josie tells her mother that she does not want to marry Billy anymore, but her mother tells her that she does not have a say in the matter (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). At Billy Andrews' house, Mr. Pye is received politely. Mr. Andrews tells him that things will work out. However, once Mr. Pye has left, the Andrews family speak honestly to one another of their opinions on the situation. Billy is silent as Mr. Andrews boasts that he will find Billy a more suitable girl to court in a bigger town nearby (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019).

Billy's sister, Prissy, calls them hypocrites for being so insensitive about Josie's reputation. She mentions events from a previous season in which her reputation was tarnished, and her parents did everything they could to get her suitor to reinstate her reputation. Prissy insists that Billy should do the same for Josie. The Andrews family is left at an impasse (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). The way in which Prissy calls out her family for their misogynistic assumptions and calls for them to change their behavior

reflects the third wave feminist value of challenging sexist comments (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). Similar to when Anne is a metaphor for third-wave feminism, Prissy is the vehicle (Richards, 1965) because she is the one taking on the actions of something she is not, that being a third-wave feminist. Her actions make third-wave feminism the tenor (Richards, 1965), and the qualifier is presentational (Osborn, 2018).

At the same time, Anne is dealing with the aftermath of the editorial as it affects her. She learns from Marilla that, even though she did not mention Josie by name, the townspeople knew who Anne had written about because Josie was the only one that ran out of the church crying (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). Anne decides to apologize to Josie. However, when Anne gets to Josie's house, Josie slaps Anne across the face and says that Anne has turned her into trash, just like Anne is (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). Then, while preparing for the next edition of the newspaper, the other students voiced their feelings that it was not fair that Anne's individual decisions were reflected on everyone working on the newspaper when she did not give them a say in the matter. Anne defends her editorial by saying that her piece was about fairness (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). When Gilbert insists that he is irritated about the article because she did not talk to them beforehand and not because of the content of the article, Anne accuses him of viewing Winifred as "an attractive piece of land." The point she is making is that men often choose the women they are going to marry based on the value of the property the woman's father would give to them upon their marriage (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019).

In this metaphor, Winifred is the vehicle (Richards, 1965) because she, as a woman, is being viewed as a desirable piece of property. "An attractive piece of land" is the tenor (Richards, 1965). This metaphor has a contextual qualifier (Osborn, 2018)

because Winifred is the same as a piece of land within the context of a man deciding if he wants to marry her. Contextual qualifiers create a connection between vehicles and tenors by pointing out the similarities they have in certain contexts (Osborn, 2018). Winifred would not be considered a piece of land in any other context. Although she meant the metaphor as a direct reference to Gilbert's actions, Anne's metaphor can be considered a metaphor that represents all women in the story.

Miss Stacy takes Anne into a smaller room to tell Anne that she is going to be taken off editorial writing as a consequence of disobeying the rules. Anne will now be delegated to write about agricultural topics (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). Anne is confronted with the fact that she did not allow the people in her life to have individual choice in the way that she allowed herself to have. She did not allow Josie to have personal autonomy (Offen, 1988) in the matter of how to address her sexual assault and she took away the other student journalists' right by not going through the proper democratic channels to publish her editorial (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). Anne's struggle to separate her regret for the negative impact that her editorial has had while also defending the ideas she expressed in her editorial show the inexplicable way in which ideas, actions, and people are connected and can be used to oppress women within the patriarchy (Lerner, 1986).

Following these scenes, we see a meeting of the school board. The men in the school board discuss taking the printing press away from the students. They do not agree with what Anne wrote in this instance and find fault with times in the past when she had attempted to encourage intersectionality through the newspaper by writing about people with racially diverse backgrounds. Their examples include an obituary written for a Black

woman and an article about Indigenous people (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). They finally decide that Anne will be removed from the newspaper and that they will get to choose what are acceptable topics for the newspaper. Rachel Lynde objects to their opinions on these articles and to them forcing Anne off of the newspaper, but they do not give her a say in the matter. She is then given the task of telling Miss Stacy of their decision (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019).

After Miss Stacy receives the news, she visits Anne and her parents. She complains to them that it is unethical for the school board to dictate what they are and are not allowed to publish in the school newspaper. She states her belief that their issue is now a matter of men feeling uncomfortable with women publicly voicing their opinions about their equality with men (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). Miss Stacy assures Anne that their dismay at the newspaper goes much deeper than Anne's article, but the school board will only let them continue with the school newspaper if Anne is no longer involved (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). In the next scene, Anne runs through the woods to a torn down shack that she and her friends had previously used for their writing club. She throws rubble around before falling down and crying. She looks at a sign she put up when the shack was torn down. It reads: Story Club: 1896-1898 W.R.I.T. (We Rest In Truth). She picks up one of the boards from the shack (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019).

At the schoolhouse, Miss Stacy and the student journalists deliberate on the rules given to them by the school board. Miss Stacy says that she cannot think of another option other than to play by the school board's rules if they want to continue creating the newspaper, at least for the time being. The students are not pleased by this option and many of them blame Anne (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). Gilbert impresses the

importance of multiple feminist values upon the other students. First, he redefines Anne's actions of printing her opinions on feminism, which were originally thought of as an act of disrespect, as an act of solidarity for a girl that had been treated unfairly (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). He further demonstrates the importance of this value by pointing out that they would want others to show them solidarity if they were placed in a similar situation as Josie. Secondly, Gilbert encourages the others to understand the feminist value of individual choice (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000) and agency (Soward, & Renegar, 2009) that Anne wrote about in her editorial (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019).

When he makes them think critically about the ideas regarding a female's ability to think for herself and make her own decisions, the other students realize that they should also take on these values and use them to challenge the norms dictated by the patriarchy. They show their adoption of these values by choosing to show solidarity (Hooks, 1986) with Anne and help her to stand up to the school board. Anne bursts into the schoolhouse with boards in her arms, and the girls run to give her hugs and apologize. Anne tells them that she has enough boards for everyone, and she has a plan. They all go to Green Gables, where they paint messages onto the boards (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019).

Anne goes over to Josie's house again. When Josie comes to the door, Anne tells her that when she wrote her editorial, she had no idea of the consequences that Josie would face because of it, that she does not have to forgive her, but wants Josie to know that she understands that she was wrong and is very sorry. Anne invites her to the protest the next day, but Josie declines the offer (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). Josie asks Anne how she knew to write about dignity and equality when she has not experienced much of

it. Anne tells her that she realized that she was worthy of love regardless of whether she was receiving love from others or not. She tells Josie that no one but her is allowed to dictate what she is worth (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). With her comments, Anne is enforcing the third-wave feminist values of individual choice (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000) and agency (Soward & Renegar, 2009). She is subverting the metaphor for young women being attractive pieces of land by encouraging Josie to have control of her own worth.

That night, Josie stares at herself in her mirror. Her mother had put her hair in rag curlers, but she pulls them out. Billy Andrews comes to talk to her. He stands outside her house while she sits by the window. Billy tells Josie that he still likes her and asks if she wants him to fix things. She tells him that she used to like him and now she does not want anything from him, least of all redemption (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). Josie's actions show that she has embraced the values Anne discussed with her. When she takes the curlers out of her hair, she is embracing the value of personal autonomy (Offen, 1988). When she turns down Billy's offer, Josie is embracing her agency (Soward & Renegar, 2009). She is saying that she has more value on her own than in relation to a man. With this belief that she is a whole person on her own, she does not need the favor of someone who has treated her poorly.

The next day, Miss Stacy and her students gather at the schoolhouse. When everyone is there, Anne yells "Let's make some noise," and they all wave the white handkerchiefs in their hands. Anne and Gilbert guide them on their walk to the town meeting hall while they all cheer. Bystanders begin to join them in their walk (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). As they walk into the meeting hall, the school board tries to ask



them not to interrupt the meeting they have in session, but the student protestors do not listen. The students get onto the stage. At first, all but Anne is standing behind the curtain. Anne begins to give a speech as the school board and townspeople stand to watch. She is interrupted by one of the men yelling that this is an outrage, but she continues to speak when Marilla insists that she has a right to speak (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019).

Josie Pye comes up to the stage and stands by Anne's side (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). Although she had previously told Anne that she would not be attending the protest, she is reciprocating Anne's solidarity by being there. Furthermore, her act of solidarity (Hooks, 1986) becomes even more recognizable in that she participates in the protest. Anne tells the school board that even though they tried to silence their voices, they have a message for them. Then she and Josie pull back the curtain (See Figure 19; Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019).

The students step forward. They have all tied the handkerchiefs around their mouths as gags (See Figure 20). They are holding the boards together to read "Freedom of Speech is a Human Right" (See Figure 20; Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). Having the students gagged during the protest is a metaphor for censorship. The students are the vehicle (Richards, 1965), and the tenor (Richards, 1965) is that they are being gagged and cannot speak. The metaphor is created through the use of a contextual qualifier (Osborn, 2018). The students are being silenced or "gagged" within the context of being student journalists because the school board is censoring them from being able to report on topics they believe are important, such as women's equality and right to bodily autonomy.



Figure 19. Left. We have a message for you. Anne after pulling back to the curtain to reveal the other protestors (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019).

Figure 20. Right. Freedom of speech is a human right. The student protestors stand on the stage, wearing gags and holding a message for the school board (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019)

For a moment, the audience stares at them in silence. Then, one of the school board members tells another member to get up on the stage. He tries to remove the boards from their arms, but they continue holding on. The previous school board member yells at them to get down with his fist raised. A flashbulb goes off and we see that Miss Stacy has taken a photo of them trying to attack the protestors (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). Gilbert goes up to the school board member on the stage with the list of the school board's acceptable topics in his hand. He tears the paper in half and tells the school board member, "Thanks for the suggestions." The school board member turns to Miss Stacy and tells her to control her children. She responds that they are not children, and they are not out of control. The audience cheers (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019).

That night, a group of men from the school board ride up to the schoolhouse in a wagon. They go inside and are then seen carrying the printing press out of the school and onto the wagon. One of them throws the cigar he was smoking on the ground in front of the steps. He steps on it to put out the flame and then they leave. He had not made sure the flame was out and a fire began to spread to the grass that surrounds the cigar. The scene fades to the credits (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). The next episode picks up the

next morning. Anne gets to school only to realize that the school has been burnt down. As Miss Stacy and the rest of the class get there, they realize that items like the stove, which would not have burned, are still there. However, the printing press, which would not have burned, is missing. They mourn the loss and discuss what to do (Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a).

Anne goes to Rachel Lynde's house in a rage. Anne asks her how she could let it happen and then tells her that the school board cannot hold them down, they will rise from the school being burnt down and will turn the school board's fear into fuel. However, Rachel had no idea that the school burned down, and she bursts into tears when Anne tells her that the printing press had been taken (Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a). Anne comforts Rachel, who believes that she is at least somewhat to blame, even though she was not a part of the school burning, because she is a member of the school board. Rachel knew how angry the men on the board were about Anne's writing and the protest and feels responsible for not imagining that this is something they would do. She declares that she will not let things stay the same as they have been, and that Anne should leave the matter for Rachel to resolve. Anne nods her agreement (Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a).

Similar to Marilla, Rachel's support of Anne and her fellow protesters is a metaphor for two different generations of feminists showing solidarity (Hooks, 1986) with one another. Throughout the series, there were multiple instances in which Rachel had been set in her ways and believed that she knew what was best for everyone. Examples of this include her support of residential schools despite a lack of knowledge of their operations and her attempts to find Miss Stacy a husband even though she wants to

stay single (Walley-Beckett, 2017). Although she still retains her authoritative personality, Rachel uses it to bring about change for women rather than to maintain the status quo enforced by the patriarchy.

In the meantime, Miss Stacy conducts school at her home. Many of the students take the college entrance exam. Afterwards, they hold a party at the site of the schoolhouse (Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a). The party goes late into the night, with the students playing games and telling stories around a bonfire. The party represents the feminist value of perseverance by having the characters take a bad situation and make a positive memory in its ruins (See Figure 21). They resist the silencing of their voice by the school board as a metaphor for the patriarchy, by still celebrating the same as they would have if the school had not burned down. The value of perseverance shows the connection between the rhetorical community in the show and that of the fan campaign, as the fans continued to resist the cancellation of the show despite CBC and Netflix attempting to silence them.



Figure 21. Dancing in the Ruins. Anne dancing at the site of the schoolhouse after it was burned down by the school board (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019).

At the next school board meeting, Marilla gets the pastor to talk to her privately so that Rachel Lynde can talk to the rest of the board without interference. Rachel first asks them how they are feeling after their actions. At first the men act as though they do

not know what she is talking about, at which point Rachel accuses them of acting in denial until discussion of the event has stopped (Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a). Then she threatens to tell everyone that she heard their outrage after the protest, therefore making it apparent to everyone in the town that they were the ones who stole the printing press and set the schoolhouse on fire (Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a).

One of the men says they did not burn down the school; it was an accident. The other men shudder at his words. Rachel says that they will not be able to prove that the fire was not done by them on purpose without admitting that it was them who stole the printing press (Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a). In return for her silence, Rachel insists that they add three women to their board, giving it an equal number of men and women on the school board. She calls a vote and the men all reluctantly vote yes to adding more women to the board. This is the ending of the storyline (Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a). This addition of women to the school board to ensure equality of representation based on gender is an important reference to the tangible results of feminism as a social movement.

Now that I have analyzed the characters, setting, and action in the storylines that act as metaphors for the fan-based campaign to save the show, I turn next to the analysis of the characters, setting, and action in the billboards that represent the fan-based campaign's rhetorical community and vision. The values embodied by the rhetorical community of characters in *Anne with E* included solidarity, personal autonomy, individual choice, agency, and challenging the patriarchy. Although tailored to a different set of circumstances, many of these values are also embodied by the fans in their campaign to save the show from cancellation.

## Rhetorical and Visual Analysis of Fan-Based Campaign's Billboards

In this section, I analyze the metaphors and fantasy themes used in three of the billboards (Anne Nation, 2020) used in the campaign for *Anne with an E* to be renewed. The storyline of the episodes analyzed in the previous section are referenced in all three billboards. Two visually reference the protest scenes (Walley-Beckett & Fox), while the third visually evokes the burning of the schoolhouse (Walley-Beckett & Tapping). Of the material created for the fan campaign, these billboards were chosen for analysis for their rhetorical message about the motivations of the fans as a rhetorical community salient and directly referenced in the fan-based campaign.



Figure 22. Left. We are not here to provoke. Billboard design featuring artwork by @welpsauce on Instagram (Mia, 2020).

Figure 23. Center. Ready to Fight for What's Right?. Billboard design featuring artwork by @luztapiaart on Instagram (Tapia, 2020)

Figure 24. Right. Representation. Billboard design featuring artwork by @jhuffizi on Instagram (Uffizi, 2020)

### *Characters in the Billboards*

Anne is the only character to appear on the billboards. Anne's appearance in the billboards is reminiscent of the way she looks in the series. Two billboards (see Figure 23 and Figure 24) show Anne dressed in the long-sleeved green dress that she wears throughout the storyline about her editorial and its aftermath (Anne Nation, 2020; Walley-

Beckett & Bailey, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a). In these two billboards (see Figure 23 and Figure 24), she is wearing her straw boater hat and has her hair in braids, both of which were common for her character in the show (Anne Nation, 2020). The length of Anne's dress is not visible in the billboards, but the coverage of the dress in *Anne with an E* shows that it went just below Anne's knees (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a). In the third billboard (see Figure 22), she is dressed in a white top and a green skirt with her red hair pulled up, an outfit that is unrelated to the storyline, but one that she does wear later in the series when she goes to college (Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-b).

As a girl living in the western world during the 1890s, Anne would have begun her progression to women's fashion at around thirteen years old (Shrimpton, 2016). There is some contention during the series about young women choosing not to wear a corset. However, Anne is not one of the females who goes against this expectation as she is shown getting into a corset during season three (Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-b). The third season shows Anne, at the age of sixteen, going back and forth between dressing in the solid color, knee length dresses worn by girls of the time and the more intricate, multi-layered full-length outfits worn by women (Shrimpton, 2016). The majority of the time that she is dressed as a woman is when she is visiting public establishments in a larger town, while she still dresses as a girl when she is in Avonlea (Walley-Beckett, 2017).

Within the context of the television show and the billboards, Anne's appearance serves as a visual metaphor for her stage in life. Anne's outfits and hairstyles are the

vehicle of the metaphor (Richards, 1965). Had no rhetorical meaning been attached to the different styles, they would simply function as ways of caring for fundamental needs. The stages of life are the tenor (Richards, 1965), with the age sometimes being girlhood and other times being womanhood. This metaphor has a communal qualifier. Communal qualifiers are created through a cultural knowledge that connects the vehicle and the tenor and understood by those in that culture (Osborn, 2018). By looking through the lens of western culture in the 1890s, one will know that short dresses signify girlhood while longer skirts signify womanhood (Shrimpton, 2016). Subsequently to this metaphor, Anne is a secondary vehicle (Richards, 1965) for the metaphor as she dons the different styles and takes on the tenor of being a girl or a woman at different times.

Anne's girlhood appearance is more prominent than her womanhood wardrobe, appearing in the entire protest plotline and two of the three billboards (See Figures 23 and 24). This punctuates the efforts to improve the future that are present throughout the narrative of the show and fan-based campaign. In the series, Anne and her friends are in a transitional period between being girls and women. Both the characters and many of the fans are making decisions that will influence the circumstances of their young womanhood and discovering that there are consequences associated with being considered as something other than children. Fighting for the future takes its shape in the form of getting Josie and all others autonomy to control their future (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a). For the fans, fighting for the future was fighting for continued representation of these characters in the form of another season of the show.



Within the billboards, Anne stands in as a representative of other characters as well as herself. For example, one of the billboards (see Figure 23) shows Anne wearing a gag in protest (Anne Nation, 2020), an action that was undertaken by several of Anne's classmates in the aforementioned storyline but not by Anne herself (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). Another of the billboards (see Figure 24) references important issues represented in the show, including racism, feminism, education, gender bias, foster care, beauty standards, indigenous history, sexual harassment, representation, LGBTQ+ rights, health care, acceptance, censorship, classism, and grief (Anne Nation, 2020). The mention of these storylines evokes storylines with characters other than Anne. Because she stands in for the entirety of the representation of the show and its myriad characters, Anne of the billboards is a synecdoche, a term used when one part of a whole is used to make a rhetorical message about the whole (Clifton, 1983). Most prominently, Anne represents all fans who were protesting the cancellation of the show, as many of the characteristics of Anne and her peers now related to the show's cancellation and the fan campaign.

Because a large portion of the fandom was made up of teenage girls (Kumar, 2021) and they were the ones who were spearheading the campaign, the teenage Anne of the campaign can be considered a metaphor for contemporary teenage activists. Just as Anne is a teenager who takes on the role of an activist and protester (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019), so do the teenage activists who organized the fan campaign to save *Anne with an E* from cancellation. They used the means available to them to bring themselves closer to the change they wanted to see. Through the actions of showing solidarity (Hooks, 1986) with the cast and crew in the injustice of

losing their show and using media to mobilize their actions, the fans show that they have embodied the agency (Soward & Renegar, 2009) that Anne exhibited.

During the protest scene in *Anne with an E*, Miss Stacy declares that her students are not children, and they are not out of control (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). The sentiment about her students extends to the rhetorical vision of the fans in their campaign to save the show. Although the fans were a group made up of people who had been devalued by the television executives who they were targeting with their campaign (Wong, 2019), they believed in their own value. They were not deterred by the attempts made by the network to silence them. Instead, they were fueled to further action. In this way, the fans were not only showing the value of perseverance but were also demonstrating their ability to reclaim their narrative.

Despite the inherent self-worth that was shown by the *Anne with an E* fandom, they were still responding to having been devalued by Netflix and CBC (Wong, 2019). In the protest storyline of *Anne with an E*, Anne uses the metaphor of men viewing women as attractive pieces of land to make a point about men picking a wife based on the value of the property that they would receive from the prospective wife's family should they marry (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). The metaphor of being seen as an attractive piece of land extends to the way that television networks think about the fans of television shows. The networks did not view the fans of *Anne with an E* as valuable pieces of land. As was stated by television executives, a major reason *Anne with an E* was canceled was because the show was not performing well (e.g., making extensive profits) with their desired demographic (Wong, 2019). In this way, fans were also a vehicle (Richards, 1965) with the tenor (Richards, 1965) being that they were not an attractive piece of

land. The qualifier is contextual (Osborn, 2018) because the fans' value is considered by the networks based on the context of them being consumers of the television show. I now turn to my analysis of the setting in the billboards.

### *Setting in the Billboards*

Social media sites were the larger setting for the fan-based campaign to save *Anne with an E*. Fans exhibited solidarity, agency, and perseverance with their use of several sites, including Twitter (Carr, 2021), the comment sections of CBC news articles (Cecco, 2020), and a petition on Change.org (H G, 2019). The ability to mobilize allowed many fans of *Anne with an E* to show solidarity with one another and have solidarity shown to them by other individuals online (Shatner, 2019; McNulty, 2019; Walley-Beckett, 2019-b; Reynolds, 2020). The agency that the internet allowed them to mobilize also allowed them to move their campaign beyond the internet. Through online crowdfunding, the fans were able to purchase billboard space in several locations, the most prominent of which were New York's Times Square (See Figure 26) and Toronto (See Figure 25; Anne Nation, 2020).



Figure 25. Left. Walley-Beckett in Toronto. Showrunner Moira Walley-Beckett visits billboard in Toronto (Walley-Beckett, 2020-b).

Figure 26. Right. New York's Time Square Billboard. Billboard display in New York's Time Square (Considine, 2020)

Using billboards that represent the efforts of their campaign to reach audiences in metropolitan areas such as New York and Toronto further expanded their audience to include people who had not been targeted through their online efforts (Ahearn, 2020). Furthermore, they were able to further their own agency through the use of methods that were on par with the abilities of the organizations (e.g., the networks) they were attempting to engage. The billboards were still able to connect with the larger audience that they had cultivated online through posts made by people who had visited the billboards (Ricketts, 2020; Martyn, 2020; McNulty, 2020; Walley-Beckett, 2020).

The willingness of the fans to take up space, whether it be across the internet or in Toronto and New York's Times Square, represents the fan's perseverance. They went through extensive measures to be heard in ways that they would not have been otherwise. The perseverance shown by them is akin to Anne's perseverance in speaking up against the devaluation of girls and women by the patriarchy, which in the case of the protest storyline was represented by the school board (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a). While Anne fought to have the right to take up space through both her writing and occupying an autonomous place in the world at large, the teenage girls who are fans of the show are fighting for the right to take up space within the realm of the network's decision-making process and through a show that represents their needs, concerns, and values. I now turn to my analysis of the setting represented through the billboards' visuals.

Two of the three billboards I analyze are set during the events of the protest storyline of the TV show (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). Although neither shows her in the setting of the protest itself, Anne's appearance on the billboards makes this detail

apparent. In one billboard (see Figure 22), Anne is waving a white handkerchief above her head in an obvious nod to the moment before the protest in which Anne rallies the students to march to the meeting hall. The caption reads: “We are not here to provoke, we are here to be heard.” This was her opening statement during the protest (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). The other billboard (see Figure 23) shows Anne in the outfit she wore throughout the storyline with a handkerchief tied around her mouth. As mentioned above, Anne was not one of the protesters who had worn the handkerchief as a gag during the protest, meaning that the choice to show her in this manner is a visual cue meant to represent the protest (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). Additionally, this image depicts the values of feminist agency and voice that undergird the rhetorical community of fans who are protesting the cancellation of the show. Television executives who chose to cancel the show are rhetorically gagging the fans, preventing their ability to share their voice and perspective regarding the non-monetary value of the show to fans.

In setting these billboards during the protest in *Anne with an E*, the protest becomes a metaphor for the fan-based campaign. They are using the concept of Anne protesting an injustice to describe their own protest against a perceived injustice they are facing. Within this metaphor, the vehicle (Richards, 1965) is the fan-based campaign, and the tenor (Richards, 1965) is Anne’s protest against misogyny and censorship. The metaphor has a situational qualifier (Osborn, 2018). The visual of the protest in the show demonstrates that the fans are similarly staging actions that will get the attention of those who oppress them, which in their case are the television executives, and calling for change.

The third billboard (see Figure 24) appears to take place during the event of the schoolhouse burning (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). Anne is once again shown in the foreground. The background is blurred to make the setting obscure, yet the orange and yellow flickering color makes it appear that there is a fire (Anne Nation, 2020). There are two potential scenes that this background could represent. The first is the moment that the schoolhouse burned down. Anne was not present during the actual burning (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). The second possibility is that the billboard is meant to represent the moment Anne and her classmates celebrate at the ruins of school (See Figure 21), since they have a bonfire during that scene (Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a). However, this drawing indicates that this is meant to represent the burning of the schoolhouse because a tear is running down Anne's cheek. There is no dialogue referenced on the billboard (Anne Nation, 2020).

In setting the billboard during this pivotal moment in the show, the burning of the schoolhouse becomes a metaphor for the cancellation of the show. The show being cancelled becomes a vehicle (Richards, 1965) with the schoolhouse burning becoming the tenor (Richards, 1965). The schoolhouse is something Anne, her classmates, and her teacher hold dearly, as well as the printing press that was inside the school. The show was something that the fans held on to and loved dearly. Just as the school board took the school away from Anne by burning it, CBC and Netflix took *Anne with an E* away from the fans by cancelling it. The metaphor has a situational qualifier (Osborn, 1965), as the connection between the vehicle and the tenor relates to the situation of something important being taken away rather than about the actions of the people involved.

### ***Action in the Billboards***

The first billboard (see Figure 22) is a close-up drawing of Anne waving a handkerchief in front of a solid yellow backdrop, connecting the billboard to the scenes in which Anne is rallying people for the protest. The caption quotes Anne during the protest: “We are not here to provoke, we are here to be heard.” (Anne Nation, 2020). Within the context of the billboard, Anne’s action comes across as though she is rallying people to join the campaign to save the show. While this billboard represents the moments before the protest, the billboard in which Anne is gagged (see Figure 23) is a visual continuation of the story. This billboard is a close-up drawing of Anne acting as one of the protesters in front of a solid teal backdrop. She is pulling the gag down so that the left side of her mouth is visible. The caption reads: “Ready to fight for what is right?” (Anne Nation, 2020). As mentioned above, both the phrase and the visual metaphor of the gag come from the storyline of the analyzed episodes (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a). Yet having Anne pull the gag down was the choice of the artist and did not reflect the actions of characters on the show. Coupled with the quotation from the show, this action serves as a metaphor for fans to no longer remain silent about the cancellation of the show.

The final billboard I analyze (see Figure 24) is a split screen. The left side of the billboard is a close-up drawing of Anne. A tear streams down the left side of her face. The background is glowing yellow and orange orbs. Anne crying in front of this billboard seems to signify that Anne is crying about the burning of the school. The right side of the billboard is a translucent orange overlay of the drawing of Anne. Over the location of Anne’s face, important topics that were a part of the show are listed in white lettering (Anne Nation, 2020). Within the context of the billboard, Anne is not only crying over

the fire, but also over the loss of a show that represented topics such as racism, feminism, human rights, Indigenous history, and LGBTQ+ rights, among the many other topics listed in the billboard (Anne Nation, 2020). The representation of topics strengthened the feminist values of intersectionality, equality, voice, and agency for the fans and caused them to enforce these values through their actions during the campaign.

Anne's presence on all three billboards is a metaphor for the feelings of the fans. In the billboards that reference the protest in the show, the fans are represented through Anne, serving as a protest against the cruelty of the show being canceled. The fans are the silent vehicles (Richards, 1965) of the metaphor, not shown on the billboard but taking on the same actions of protest that Anne did in the series, albeit a little different in their methodology. In the billboard (see Figure 24) where Anne is presented crying in front of the fire with the list of storyline topics, the billboard serves as a metaphor for the fans being sad about the cancellation of the show. Once again, the fans are the vehicle of the metaphor and Anne despairing over the burning of the school and the struggles associated with the topics mentioned is the tenor. In the case of both, the metaphors are created through the use of a presentational qualifier.

The fans are like Anne because they take on the same actions as her, those actions being protest and grieving something that is important to them. Knowing that Anne experienced loss in her life but did not lose hope, creates a sense of solidarity for fans. They feel her pain more acutely as they have lost something they care about deeply in the form of the cancellation of the show. Just as they showed solidarity with the characters by supporting the show while the show was on the air, their representation of Anne acting on many of the same feelings as the fans represents their feeling that Anne is showing



solidarity with them. Furthermore, the knowledge that Anne experienced such a setback as having her school burned down and continued to believe in the value of perseverance allows the fans to believe that they could also persevere through their own loss and advocate to executives to bring the show back.

### **Rhetorical Vision**

The worldview shared within these aforementioned analyzed episodes of *Anne with an E* (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019, Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a) begins when Anne decides that she must fight for women's rights. As the story continues, the meaning of "fighting for what is right" grows to include fighting for the right to freedom to publicly speak about feminist issues. Therefore, although the rhetorical vision created by Anne has its roots in the belief that women's issues need to be discussed, the rhetorical vision goes deeper to represent the need to fight for social rights and women's equality in general. The billboards continue the rhetorical vision of "fighting for what is right." One of the billboards (see Figure 23) goes so far as to have this slogan as the tagline. Feminism, censorship, and a variety of other human rights topics are explicitly evoked within the billboards. Two of the billboards (see Figure 22 and Figure 23) metaphorically reference these topics through the visuals of the protest, while the other references them with text (Anne Nation, 2020). However, fighting for these social issues has become a matter of representation. To fight for change, the fans are fighting for a show that encourages conversations about these controversial and often intersectional and gendered topics.

In both contexts, what is right and fair means defending those who are not given the same amount of rights as the dominant male members of society. Fan activists, the

many of which were teenage girls (Wong, 2019), faced opposition in the form of CBC and Netflix, two networks that had infinitely more power in society than they did. They fought to have their own agency in the matter of the show's future, thereby adding a voice to the conversation that is commonly silenced in favor of the financial needs and motivations of the network (Wong, 2019).

As a rhetorical community, the fans knew it was possible to make their voices heard because Anne stood up against an injustice she perceived in her own life. In Anne's case, the school board is the dominant group, and the students are the ones with the lack of rights. The school board is made up mainly of white, cis-gendered men who all appear to be senior citizens. As both the gender and the race with the most power within a patriarchal society (Lerner, 1986), they have the resources to both uplift and oppress others. For example, they enforce control over the printing press. When protesting for the right to freedom of speech, Anne is standing up for herself and her classmates to have the ability to write about topics they feel should be discussed (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019).

As discussed in Chapter Two, parasocial relationships are one-sided interpersonal relationships that fans have with people or characters in the media (Horton & Wohl, 1956). The fan's parasocial relationships with the character of Anne are present in the billboards, but the social issues mentioned also connect to their parasocial relationships with other characters. Through the billboards, the fans are saying that the fact that these social issues are part of the characters is part of the reason they personally can connect to the storylines depicted in the show.

As the face of the billboards, Anne is the sanctioning agent (Shields & Preston, 1985) for the rhetorical vision of fighting for what is right. This is a role that she carries over from the television show. For a portion of the story, she is the only one who believes in her worldview. However, in time and with the help of Gilbert Blythe, Anne's worldview is adopted as a rhetorical vision by the rest of the classmates. Once they become open to Anne's worldview, organized action begins to take place. They become convinced that Anne's philosophy and subsequently her idea for the protest is a rhetorical vision they should believe in (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019) The visual metaphor of Anne reacting to the cancellation, whether it be through her protesting or through the action of mourning, encourages viewers to become a part of the organized action to save the show.

A second factor of fighting for what is right is for a person to make their voice heard. Anne sums up this detail when she begins the protest by announcing that they are not there to provoke, they are there to be heard. However, fighting for what is right by making your voice heard is a motif that is shown throughout the storyline. Anne first "fights for what is right" by using her editorial to make her voice heard. She later "fights for what is right" by using her voice and visuals to protest against censorship (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). Both times, the message is being heard not by the people who already believe that these changes need to be made, but by the people who are least likely to view the information positively. The townspeople do not believe in Anne's worldview when her editorial is published. When the student journalists protest censorship, their audience is the school board who does not share the view that they should be able to write about provoking topics such as women's equality

and right to personal autonomy (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a).

Each billboard tells fans to stream *Anne with an E* and use the hashtag #renewannewithane in support of their cause. The billboards do not fully reference the methods that fans should use to make their voices heard, other than to watch the show (Anne Nation, 2020). However, through encouraging viewers to watch the show and use the hashtag, the billboards reinforce the idea that making your voice heard is the way to fight for what is right. Similar to when Anne made her voice heard with people who were unlikely to agree with her, the fans are protesting to be heard by an audience of television executives who had already made a decision not to invest more funding into the show (Petski, 2019). These executives had much more power than the fans, similar to the way that the school board had much more power than the students who protested against censorship. Despite the unfair advantage that the campaign's audience of television executives had over the rhetors of the fans, the fans proved that it was important to be heard when it comes to fighting for what you believe is right, regardless of how others might view your actions.

Ultimately, being heard through the billboards did not bring about the change the fans were hoping for in terms of Netflix renewing the show. In the TV show, women are not granted any more rights than they had before Anne's public editorial, and the students are no longer able to make a newspaper when the printing press is taken from them. Yet the overarching message of the billboards and the episodes from the show that reinforce the billboards' message is that the fans are a visible rhetorical community with a shared feminist rhetorical vision. They are using their voices to stand their ground and raise

awareness regarding what was important to them. In the next and final chapter of the thesis, I use this analysis of the show and billboards to answer the research questions and derive theoretical and applied implications for how this fan-based campaign served as a public protest to amplify feminist values and build feminist solidarity within a rhetorical community.

## DISCUSSION

In the previous four chapters, I introduced the *Anne with an E* fan-based campaign, described the context of the campaign and the rhetorical lenses I would utilize, and analyzed the selected episodes of the show and fan-created billboards. In this chapter, I answer each of my research questions and discuss the implications this study has for metaphoric criticism (Osborn, 2018), fantasy-theme criticism (Bormann, 1972), and social movement rhetoric, especially as it relates to fans and girls involved in activism. After I have reviewed and answered the research questions from Chapter One and discussed the implications that emerged from the study, I address the limitations of the study, suggestions for further research, and end with a summary.

### **Answering the Research Questions**

Each research question addressed one of the two theoretical lenses I utilized in this study. First, I address the findings associated with metaphorical criticism (Osborn, 2018). Secondly, I address the findings associated with fantasy-theme criticism (Bormann, 1972). While the previous chapter used elements of these theories to bring forward details of what made the billboards (Anne Nation, 2020) a persuasive message about the campaign, I now use inductive reasoning to make conclusions about the rhetorical messaging of the billboards.

**RQ1:** The first research question asked how metaphors influenced the overall rhetorical message created by fans in the *Anne with an E* campaign. Metaphors were found prominently throughout both the selected episodes (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a) and the fan-created billboards (Tapia, 2020; Uffizi, 2020; Mia, 2020). Anne herself becomes a

metaphor for the desires and actions of third-wave feminists. She serves as a synecdoche (Clifton, 1983) for the entire fan-based campaign and emphasizes the rhetorical vision of equality for the fan-based community. Through the visual metaphor of Anne acting as a fan activist in the billboards (Tapia, 2020; Uffizi, 2020; Mia, 2020), the rhetorical message of the campaign becomes one of feminist values, a shared feeling of loss, and a common rhetorical goal of preservation of the show in the face of opposition from television executives. The metaphors of the campaign were fueled by the metaphors in the show, which were primarily used to create a rhetorical message about the similarities in life for women in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and women in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Walley-Beckett, 2017). The combination of metaphors in the campaign and in the show used rhetorical messaging to build a cohesive rhetorical community of fans.

Visual metaphors were found throughout the campaign, including in Anne's clothing, her actions, and more generally, in Anne as a presence in the campaign. The most used qualifiers within the billboards were communal, situational, and presentational (Osborn, 2018), all of which are presented through a combination of Anne's appearance and fans' knowledge of certain episodes of the television show (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a).

The communal metaphor of Anne's clothing coupled with fans' knowledge of the show tells the audience she is a teenage girl and becomes a metaphor of the youth and lower levels of power of the fan protestors. The context clues of interacting with objects from the protest in two billboards (Tapia, 2020; Mia, 2020) and standing in front of a large fire in another (Uffizi, 2020), both of which relate to important scenes from the show (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a), are a metaphor

with a situational qualifier (Osborn, 2018) for the fans being placed in a situation where they need to mourn *Anne with an E* and protest its cancellation. Meanwhile the actions of Anne mourning and protesting in the way she did in the storyline becomes a metaphor for the actions of fans. Fans are encouraged to protest the cancellation of the show in the same way that Anne used protest to advocate for the students' freedom of speech in the selected episodes and storyline of the show (Anne Nation, n.d.-b; Tapia, 2020; Uffizi, 2020; Mia, 2020).

The actions of the fans demonstrate that they are a rhetorical community outside of the television show that they love. They are united by the ability to see themselves as advocates and members of the rhetorical community found in the television show, *Anne with an E*. Through visual metaphors (Tapia, 2020; Uffizi, 2020; Mia, 2020), the fans represented the loss of the show as akin to the injustice of having the school board silence the students' voices in the show. Just as the school board believed they were silencing Anne and her peers by taking away their main source of agency in the printing press and her educational institution (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Tapping, 2019-a), the expectation of the networks was that the fans would be complacent in the silencing created by cancelling the show. As Anne continued to persevere after being silenced, the fans also continued to make their voice heard through the fan-based campaign to save the show, especially through the prominent locations of the billboards in Toronto and New York City's Times Square (Anne Nation, 2020). The metaphors show that the fan's rhetorical vision was developed as a direct result of Anne exhibiting the feminist values of solidarity and perseverance. Therefore, the use of metaphors



becomes a representation of the continuation of the rhetorical vision between the television show and the fan-based campaign.

**RQ2:** The second research question asks what rhetorical vision emerges from the *Anne with an E* fan campaign. The main rhetorical vision that can be found in the campaign is that of fighting for what is right by making your voice heard. When advocating for Anne's rhetorical vision in the show, Gilbert Blythe says that Anne would have stood up for anyone who had experienced a cruelty (Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019). The fans make it clear throughout the billboards (Anne Nation, 2020) that they viewed the cancellation of the show as a cruelty and those who are facing this cruelty are themselves, in addition to the cast and crew of the show.

The fans create a rhetorical message about the power that women and teenage girls can have when they embrace feminist values such as solidarity, perseverance, and agency (Hooks, 1988; 2000) to create positive change. As females living in a patriarchal society (Hooks, 2000), the fans of *Anne with an E* were in a position where they were not given a say in matters that affected them and other girls and women (e.g. the type of representation made available to them). Through their campaign, the fans make it clear that their rhetorical vision keeps them from being passive in concerns that impact them and their fellow underrepresented stakeholders in the matter of the show's cancellation.

Media connected to girls has a history of being considered lesser by society, while those who align themselves with this media, have been criticized and marginalized (Stanfill, 2013). Netflix has added to this narrative with the cancellation of *Anne with an E* and several other girl-led shows (Lawler, 2022; Van Arendonk, 2022). At a basic level, fans' perseverance and agency was used to show solidarity with the cast and crew of

*Anne with an E* and to show that, in their own way, they can effect change in the form of having a say in the media that is given priority within society. In a broader sense, the billboards represent a rhetorical message that girls and women, can create the changes they want to see in society in general.

### **Implications**

Each of the theoretical lenses of metaphorical criticism (Osborn, 2018) and fantasy-theme analysis (Bormann, 1972) were chosen for their ability to draw insight into the rhetoric of the fan-based campaign to save *Anne with an E* from cancellation. As such, this study demonstrates the relevance of combining metaphorical criticism (Osborn, 2018) and fantasy-theme analysis (Bormann, 1972) to the application of studying fan-based social movements, as well as applying these lenses to the broader subject of social movement rhetoric. In this section, I describe the implications of using each lens. After discussing the theoretical implications of the study, I turn to practical implications, in which I address social movement activism and the stakeholders involved in television programming.

#### ***Implications for Metaphorical Criticism***

The use of metaphorical criticism (Osborn, 2018) within this study has implications for fandom studies, particularly the study of visual fan creations such as the billboards in this study. The fan-based art (Emeri, 2019; Tapia, 2019; Mia; 2019) created in the wake of *Anne with an E*'s cancellation, several of which were then edited to become the billboards displayed in Toronto and New York City (Anne Nation, 2020), contained many visual metaphors. As an analysis tool, metaphorical criticism (Osborn, 2018) allowed the artistic choices of the fan artists to be understood as rhetorical choices

with consequences for their audiences, rather than arbitrary actions. Fan art has become an important part of online fandom that extends past the realm of “Save Our Show” campaigns and fan activism. Fan art is most often shared on social media for the pleasure of expressing and sharing love of a star or piece of media (Shoenberger, 2021). As fans often project their own interpretations onto their art, metaphorical criticism has the potential to further add to scholarly understanding of fan desires and motivations as connected to the media that they love and hope to save in the case of “Save Our Show” campaigns.

Furthermore, the study has demonstrated the power of metaphorical criticism (Osborn, 2018) as a way of understanding fans and their expressions of feminism. Past research that utilized metaphorical criticism has shown that metaphors are a significant way in which feminists create rhetorical messages (Janusz, 1994). Studies of feminist metaphors have focused on a spectrum of metaphors from the use of “waves” to delineate the different generations of feminist activists (Dean & Aune, 2015; Evans & Chamberlin, 2015; Helmreich, 2017) to uses of metaphors by media producers (Farris, 2020; Batterson, 2016) and rhetoric surrounding women in politics (Dosterglick, 2022; Puls, 2014; Anderson, 2002; Edwards & McDonald, 2010). The use of metaphorical criticism to study the campaign to save *Anne with an E* shows that metaphorical criticism can branch out into the study of fan activity as a source of feminist activism.

### ***Implications for Fantasy-Theme Analysis***

Previous use of fantasy-theme analysis (Bormann, 1972) has furthered understanding of social movement rhetoric across several periods of time, methods, and motives (Shields & Preston, 1985; Jackson, 1996; 1999; Baldo, 2010; Prentice & Boange,

2011; Meador, 1996; Duffy, 2003). Bormann (1972) set the foundation for social movements to act as an artifact for fantasy-theme analysis. The study of the *Anne with an E* campaign expands the concept of social movements as an area of focus for this lens by demonstrating its effectiveness in analyzing a fan-based social movement. The implications of the successful use of fantasy-theme analysis within this study is a path for future study of “Save Our Show” campaigns using the lens.

A significant finding from the *Anne with an E* fan campaign was the connection between the fantasy themes (Bormann, 1971) in the show and those within the fan-created billboards (Anne Nation, 2020), which in turn represented striking similarities in the rhetorical vision of the rhetorical community of fans and the rhetorical community of characters from the show. Bormann (1971) conceptualized such occurrences as fantasy chains, which he described as the process by which fantasies are built upon one another in a manner that keeps the rhetorical vision from ending. The implication of these connections sets forth a path for further research on the study of fantasy chains that exist between other fan communities as an extension of the values shown in the media or person to which they correlate.

The interpersonal relationship between fans and television characters, also referred to as parasocial relationships (Horton & Wahl, 1956) have previously been found to have a great influence on fans. The connections often go so far as to continue influencing the fan’s emotional state when they no longer have an ongoing relationship with the character, similar to the way they would be affected at the end of a social breakup (Cohen, 2004; Cohen & Eyal, 2006). Research has also shown that fans go through measures to try to maintain their relationship with the fandom following loss of a

parasocial relationship (Russell & Schau, 2014). The findings of this study suggest that fantasy chains occur through the development of parasocial relationships between fans and the characters in the show and has the potential to influence the rhetorical vision of fans following the parasocial breakup, as was shown with the rhetoric of Anne with an E fans in their campaign. Combining these two theories in future research may lend further insights into how necessary parasocial relationships might be to the creation of any fantasy chain within a rhetorical community.

### ***Implications for fan-based campaigns as social movements***

Fan-based campaigns are not a new concept. However, over time they have changed in scope and in the way they are considered by the public. Areas of “Save Our Show” history that have been studied include the incident of *Star Trek* fans reportedly marching to NBC’s Burbank office in protest of a possible cancellation (Pearson, 2010), the more common protest methods of petitions, boycotts, letter-writing, and emailing campaigns addressed to television producers and networks (Earl & Kimport, 2009), and the utilization of social media as a means of driving traffic to petitions that fans created on petition hosting websites (Earl & Kimport, 2009). Modern day “Save Our Show” campaigns have been heavily publicized online by journalist websites (Carr, 2021; Goldberg, 2018; Wright, 2021). The consensus of those who have previously published on the topic has been that “Save Our Show” campaigns are a non-political type of activism separate from other social movements.

The findings of this study, however, show that “Save Our Show” campaigns have the potential to espouse political values related to traditional social movements that are advocating for political or policy change. In addition to the main motive of obtaining an

additional season of *Anne with an E*, the fan-based campaign analyzed in this study included rhetorical messages that supported the larger social movement and rhetorical messaging typically connected to third-wave feminism (Baumgardner & Richards, 2000). Furthermore, for the rhetorical community of fans, getting their show renewed became an act of social justice due in large part to their resonance with the storylines of the characters in the show who belonged to minority groups. To these fans, a fight for the show to be renewed was political because they were fighting for the social justice of having underrepresented populations receive positive representation in the media.

### **Implications for teenage girls and activism**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has seen growth in the number of teenage girls who have been considered leaders of major social movements. High profile examples of young women who became known for their influence for various social movements have included Malala Yousafzai for girls' right to education (Malala Fund, n.d.), Greta Thunberg for young people's rights to a stable world climate and environment (Nordstrom, 2019, and Amanda Gorman for young people's voice in equality and representation in government (Walsh, 2018). Each of these activists has championed their own causes and been aided by media-use in their own way (Malala Fund, n.d.; Nordstrom, 2019; Walsh, 2018). Similar to Anne with her use of the school newspaper (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Fox, 2019), social media platforms are used by teenage girls to create widespread knowledge about feminist activism and encourage the spread of feminism values (Keller, 2019). Regardless of *Anne with an E* not receiving a fourth season, the feminist activism shown throughout the campaign is a testament to the power that teenage girls and young women have to influence change in unexpected ways. As shown

through this study, they are not limited by the traditional conventions of social movements and yet they have earned the respect to be taken seriously.

### ***Implications for television networks***

Because the television networks and executives were the ones who had the power to renew or cancel the show, CBC and Netflix had the most control in terms of the show's longevity (Petski, 2019). However, ultimately the fans, who have the least power of the stakeholders involved in the cancellation, would have a great influence over the networks. The fans had the ability to sway public opinion of both networks with their pleas for the show to be renewed. Analysis of the billboards has shown that the rhetorical community created around a show can create a large-scale appeal to an audience's sense of social justice and subsequently shine a light on possible biases had about the worth of certain programming and demographics. For Netflix, the voices of *Anne with an E* would amplify other fandoms who felt Netflix was showing unfavorable treatment to shows about young girls (Lawler, 2022; Van Arendonk, 2022). Consequently The power that the fanbase had in determining the public perception of the networks who control *Anne with an E* shows the need for networks to consider fans more intentionally during their decision-making processes. Underestimation of fans' abilities and activism has the potential to lead to a poor public image of the network as a brand and may potentially influence how consumers interact with networks in the future.

### **Limitations**

Rhetoricians are most concerned with the decisions a speaker or writer has made to persuade their audience, including what the consequences of those decisions are for specific audiences. When conducting a visual rhetorical analysis, a rhetorician concerns

themselves with the elements of language, symbols, meanings, and persuasion used by a given rhetor (Natanson, 1955). As a rhetorical study, the results of this study were confined within the scope of these methodological limitations (e.g., I cannot generalize these findings to the general population nor make effect claims that the visual rhetoric of the billboards made the fan-based campaign effective).

Furthermore, the findings of this study do not attempt to make claims about the rhetoric of other fan-based campaigns. Although I placed the campaign in conversation with past fan-based campaigns and other social movements during the first two chapters, the findings of this study cannot be used to make claims about the rhetorical choices made in other fan-based campaigns. Instead, this analysis contributes to our understanding of how the choices of rhetors and fan-based rhetorical campaigns have consequences for the specific audience of television executives and networks, strengthening the rhetorical community of fans and providing a unified rhetorical vision for this fan-based community to continue in their activism regarding feminist values and beliefs.

Furthermore, while I have purposely chosen the artifacts based on the belief that an analysis of the billboards significantly contributes to the understanding of the *Anne with an E* fan-based campaign and public discourse surrounding fan activism, this study does not wholly represent the scope of the entire individual campaign. The social media posts, letter writing, and comments on news sites remain significant portions of the *Anne with an E* campaign, yet each of these areas received limited attention due to the scope of this study. Some billboards from the campaign have also been excluded from the study's



analysis based on their lack of connection to the storyline I chose to analyze in conversation with the billboards.

### **Future Research**

In terms of the *Anne with an E* fan-based campaign, future research has the ability to further understanding by focusing on other facets of the campaign. Possible artifacts to be studied include the tweets made by fans, the billboards that were not included in this analysis, additional artwork that was not included in the billboards, and other materials made by the organizers of the fan-based campaign to save the show. For example, studying the narratives of those who organized and participated in the fan-based campaign might lead to insights into their motivations and tactics that supported the campaign as a whole. The way that the television networks communicated with fans regarding the show's cancellation may provide insight from an alternative perspective, as would analyzing the rhetoric and solidarity to save the show as shown by the cast, crew and other celebrities. Additionally, because the intersectional aspect of the series was such an important feature for fans, future research could include analyzing the campaign in conversation with other important storylines from throughout the series.

As this analysis did not connect to the effects of the campaign, another possibility for further research would be to study the campaign for its implications in terms of the change or lack thereof in the power dynamics between fans and television executives during subsequent "Save Our Show" campaigns. As the rhetoric of fan-based campaigns are understudied within the field of rhetoric, future research should continue to analyze the rhetoric of the phenomenon. While the *Anne with an E* campaign focused on the feminist values of the show and the unified rhetorical vision and agency of the fans, the

rhetoric of other fan-based campaigns may relate to other social movements based on the values of the television show or fandom associated with the campaign. Ultimately, whether or not other campaigns are found to intersect with social justice efforts, additional research on the topic of fan-based campaign rhetoric will lead to greater understanding regarding how fans communicate about the importance of their favorite media to their fans, television networks, and the broader public to save a particular show.

### **Summary**

The *Anne with an E* fan campaign highlighted storylines of social issues that fans felt were important for society. Of particular interest to the fan community was a storyline from the series in which Anne and her friends organized a protest following a sexual assault and censorship aimed at silencing girls from speaking out on gendered issues (Anne Nation, 2020). This storyline was heavily referenced in the billboards that the fan-based campaign displayed in Toronto and New York City. In this analysis, I used fantasy theme analysis (Borman, 1972) and metaphorical criticism (Osborn, 2018) to conduct a visual and textual rhetorical analysis of billboard advertisements from the campaign in conversation with the television episodes that the billboards referenced.

The billboards were found to contain visual rhetoric and metaphors that positioned the campaign at the intersection of protest rhetoric and feminist rhetoric and bridged the gap between the efforts of the characters in the show and the efforts of the fan activists who were trying to persuade the network executives to save the show. Whereas the storylines referenced within the billboards can be considered metaphors for contemporary feminist issues (Walley-Beckett & Bailey, 2019; Walley-Beckett & Fox,

2019; Tapping & Walley-Beckett, 2019), the metaphors within the billboards represented Anne's feminist values as a rationale for the fan-based community's own rhetorical vision, which emphasized fighting for what is right and making their voices heard.

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