

## **ANNE WITH AN E, REPRESENTING EQUALITY IN MARRIAGE IN THE 19th CENTURY: JOHN FISKE'S SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS**

Dhea Pramesti Regita Cahyani<sup>1</sup>, Dewi Candraningrum<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of English Education School of Teacher Training and Education  
Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta

<sup>2</sup>Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta

[<sup>1</sup>deapramesti10@gmail.com](mailto:deapramesti10@gmail.com)

[<sup>2</sup>dc119@ums.ac.id](mailto:dc119@ums.ac.id)

### **ABSTRACT**

*This study aims to determine the representation of Anne's character confronts women's stereotypical roles during the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century by being a feminist in the centre of a patriarchal society, fighting for equality, body autonomy, and the fundamental rights of women. The research data is from Netflix original series Anne with an E premiered seven years ago. This series based on a classic children novel set in the late 19th Century that recounts Anne Shirley's adventures. This paper focus on the third one since it is the one more relevant to the topic and theory that will be discussed. The researcher used qualitative research method with a semiotic analysis to analyse the research object. The data analysis technique is based from "The Codes of Television" semiotics theory by John Fiske. The approach used to investigate are; the level of reality, the level of representation, and the level of ideology. Based on the data, the researcher has found in this Century and Canada, women didn't have a voice, but Anne become that voice that many tried to silence. She fought gratefully for women's rights, and she applied it to her life. A patriarchal society was confronted not just by Anne but by a complete change of thought. Anne's character is a true feminist icon who fought for women's rights and works as an example for the women of nowadays.*

**Keywords:** *Feminism, Semiotic Analysis, John Fiske*

## **A. Introduction**

Film in a narrow sense is the presentation of images through the big screen, but in a broader sense it can also include those broadcast on TV. Film is one of the mass media in the form of audio visual and is very complex in nature(Gray & Lotz, 2019). Film becomes an aesthetic work as well as an information tool that can be an entertaining tool, a propaganda tool, and a political tool. It can also be a means of recreation and education, on the other hand it can also act as a dissemination of new cultural values(Nurwulandari & Rofiq, 2021). Movies can be referred to as cinema or live images which are defined as works of art, popular forms of entertainment, as well as industrial production or business goods (Basinger, 2023).

Most of the films are adaptations of novels. The interest displayed by the public in watching the films speaks volumes about the quality of creativeness both in the original and adaptation. Film and literature are common in certain points of contact, as they are the narrative structure and impression of reality(Altunbay & Alaca, 2021).

Feminism can refer both to ideas about women's role, status and history, and to actions, such as campaigns for women's rights. Feminism is a fairly new movement(Vincent, 2023). It began at the end of the eighteenth century, continued on and off throughout the nineteenth, and became most active in the twentieth century. A society in which men are dominant is called a patriarchal society and one in which women are dominant is called a matriarchal society(Timm & Sanborn, 2022). Some people believe that matriarchal societies may have been more common in the past (Ringrose et al., 2021). Against the odds, some matriarchal societies. It is difficult to find societies where women and men are treated completely equally. Women are less likely than men to own land or property, receive an education, earn their own money, or have a say in how society is run. Despite the huge changes of the past two centuries, this is still largely true today. Feminism suggest a practical determination to alter unjust laws, whether about divorce, property, or voting rights(Buttler & Scheurer, 2023). But it also implies a philosophical questioning of traditional values and ideas, from women's intellectual and emotional capacities to male-female relationships to the ways women and man think, act, and feel. A lot happened to women's roles and the women's movement during this period of ferment.

So is the movie called Anne with an E. Anne with an E is a movie that tells the story of Anne Shirley, an orphan girl who struggles to be accepted and find her place in the world. The movie is adapted from the classic children's novel by L.M. Montgomery.

Films not only shape societal constructs but also serve as recordings of life that grow and develop within society and are then projected onto the screen (Andersson-Bakken et al., 2022). Over time, films have evolved into a medium that represents various social and cultural realities, allowing the visualization and depiction of social issues, one of which is patriarchal culture. Patriarchal culture is a term used to describe a social system in which power, control, and authority are primarily held by men or male figures. In this cultural context, men have dominance that encompasses various aspects of life, from family structure, community life, to social institutions. Patriarchy creates a gender hierarchy that gives greater privileges and control to men, while women often find themselves in lower and more restricted positions (Rachman, 2023)..

"Anne with an E" is a Canadian television drama series adapted from the classic novel Anne of Green Gables by Lucy Maud Montgomery. The series first aired in 2017 and ended its third season in 2019. The story follows the life of Anne Shirley, a 13-year-old orphan girl who has an extraordinary imagination and a great zest for life. The series has three seasons, but this paper will focus on the third one since it is the one more relevant to the topic and theory that will be discussed.

Anne Shirley (played by Amybeth McNulty) is an orphan who has spent most of her life in orphanages and abusive foster families. One day, she is accidentally adopted by two elderly siblings, Marilla (Geraldine James) and Matthew Cuthbert (R. H. Thomson), who actually want a boy to help with the work at Green Gables, their farmhouse in Avonlea, Prince Edward Island.

The third season of Anne with an E continues Anne Shirley-Cuthbert's (Amybeth McNulty) story of self-discovery, exploring her origins and facing new challenges in Avonlea. The season culminates Anne's journey to adulthood, deepening the themes of friendship, love, equality, and social struggle.

Anne is now 16 years old and increasingly curious about her biological parents. This journey takes her to another city in search of answers, although Marilla (Geraldine James) is initially worried about Anne's desire. However, with the support of her friends, Anne is convinced that discovering her origins is part of understanding who she is.

This season also highlights social issues, especially when Ka'kwet (Kiawentiio Tarbell), a girl from the Mi'kmaq indigenous tribe, meets Anne and builds a friendship with her. However, Ka'kwet story becomes tragic when she is forced into an assimilation school by the government, where indigenous children are separated from their culture and family. Anne and her friends try to help, but the harsh realities of the colonial system make the situation even more difficult.

The tension between Anne and Gilbert Blythe (Lucas Jade Zumann) grows even more in this season. Gilbert, who initially dated Winifred "Winnie" Rose (Ashleigh Stewart), began to realize that his heart was always for Anne. On the other hand, Anne also realizes her feelings for Gilbert, but is afraid to express them. After much confusion and emotional moments, the two finally confess their feelings to each other in a very touching scene.

At the end of the season, Anne receives the news that she has been accepted to Queen's College, which leads her to a new journey in her life. Before leaving, she and Gilbert finally declare their love for each other through letters. Diana Barry (Dalila Bela) also faces a dilemma in her life, while other characters like Ruby Gillis, Josie Pye, and Cole MacKenzie also have their own story developments.

This paper focused on studying the film by employing the semiotic method by John Fiske. The social code of the level was the result of the level of reality and the level of representation which is categorized into acceptance and social relations by ideological codes, such as capitalism, individualism, race, patriarchy, and so on. The results of the study were expected to provide the insight into how a film could depict reality with the given issue.

## **B. Research Methods**

This research uses a qualitative research type. Qualitative research is a research method that aims to understand phenomena by way of description, in the form of words and language (Jiemsak & Jiemsak, 2022). A qualitative research produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from the behavior of people who can be observed (Mairc, 2020). This research is based on philosophy and emphasizes meaning (Maguire, 2023). Qualitative research aims to gain a better understanding of phenomena experienced by research subjects, such as behavior, perceptions, motivations, actions, and others. Qualitative research is conducted in a

natural context and employs various (o'g'li et al., 2023). The data forms include text such as images, photos, captures, and more. Doing qualitative research means understanding that it is a craft, marked by the challenge of doing original research and pursuing three important objectives: transparency, methodic Ness, and adherence to evidence (Brennen, 2021). The approach used in this research is John Fiske's semiotic analysis approach, which includes three levels of coding: the level of reality, the level of representation, and the level of ideology (Tréré, 2018).

The object of this research is the film *Anne with an E*. The data collection techniques in this research use three methods: observation, literature study, and documentation study. Observation is a process of directly observing the research object. In this research, the observation process is conducted by watching the film *Anne with an E* to obtain relevant data on how patriarchal culture is visualized in the film *Anne with an E*. The literature study in this research is conducted by searching for and reading literature in the form of theses, journals, scientific articles, and books relevant to the research being conducted (Lausberg, 2023). The documentation study used in this research involves taking screen captures of scenes that visualize patriarchal culture in the film *Anne with an E*. Fiske defines semiotics as the understanding of signs involving the comprehension of how each type of work, in the context of society, communicates and conveys meaning (Tomaž & Walanchalee, 2020). John Fiske developed the theory of television codes, which states that the codes in television programs are interconnected and form specific meanings. Thus, reality not only appears through these codes but is also influenced by viewers' different perceptions based on each individual's references. Fiske's conceptual model is not only applicable to television programs but can also be applied to other media texts, including films. Fiske classifies coding into three levels for television broadcasts, which can also be applied in the context of films (Fabianti & Putra, 2021).

In the television codes that have been expressed in John Fiske's theory, namely that events are broadcast through the world of television has been encoded by social codes which are divided into three levels of them as follows: (1) Reality, (2) Representation, and (3) Ideology. At this level, the code that includes is *appearance, make-up, dress, behavior, speech, gesture, expression, dialogue, and environment*. And the representation stage contains technical codes such as cameras, lighting, editing, music, sound. This is already included in the level of reality. Although the

researcher uses John Fiske's The Code of Television theory which tends to be used to analyze semiotics at the level of communication science, the researcher still leads to the level of literary and language analysis.

### **C. Research Result and Discussion**

Results are also understood as answers to the questions posed in the introduction. The discussion is the link between the results and the research questions (Nurwulandari & Fadhilah, 2017). After analyzing the data taken from the film *Anna with An E*, the results of the analysis are presented based on literary and language analysis.

#### **1. Struggling for Freedom of Speech and Improvisation**

Biological standards applied in society influence perceptions of the roles and functions of gender in its contribution to social activities. In addition, there are various stereotypes based on gender factors, for example about sexist views in cases of sexual harassment against women.

As Anne did in trying to express her opinion regarding the harassment case experienced by Josie Pye. She expressed sharp opinions regarding the incidents of sexual harassment that led to what Josie experienced. Here is Anne's opinion regarding the threat to women's autonomy that she wrote in the editorial letter:

*"Women matter on their own, not in relation to a man. We all deserve bodily autonomy, to be treated with respect and dignity. To say 'Stop,' and be listened to; not pushed, scorned, and told that men know more about our basic rights and desires than we do. Women are not whole because of men, but women are whole from the moment they are born into the world."*

This makes Josie angry with Anne for writing and distributing the editorial letter. In the next meeting, the Board also decided that there would be no more publications or editorials that voiced barbaric opinions by withdrawing the printing presses from Avonlea students. So Anne planned a demonstration to spearhead free speech and improvised by inviting her friends to join the action. Anne also apologizes and tries to get Josie to speak the facts and let go of everything that restricts her rights. The following is a dialog that illustrates the situation.

*"Translated with DeepL.com (free version) "For most of my life I've had to fight the idea that I'm nothing more than someone to throw away or pass around as needed, or that I'm not capable of being of real help because I'm a girl (Anne). Right, trash. (Josie). Yes. That. But I came to understand that I was the same*

*person the whole time. I'm loved now, but when I wasn't, it didn't mean I wasn't worthy of it. No one but you is allowed to dictate what you're worth (Anne)."* S3 Eps.7 [00:27:06-00:27:38]

Having a bitter life experience, Anne has experienced a lot of rejection, ostracism, intimidation and oppression that she experienced as an orphan and as a woman. Life experiences have made her a woman of resilience and courage. As she proved that she can be accepted by society which initially underestimated her with all of Anne's background.

## 2. Struggling for Decision-Making

The film *Anna with An E* shows the development of feminist thought in the form of efforts to achieve equality in education, legal rights, employment opportunities and voting rights. Marilla belongs to the group of individuals who support the change by encouraging Anne to move forward and use her right to determine her life choices and ignoring the negative assumptions that discriminate against women. The form of moral support can be seen in the dialog below:

*"It worries me what the minister said. Not the not fibbing part. He was right about that. It's the not going to school and being a wife part (Anne). I've been pondering about that, too. His thinking seems a mite old-fashioned to me. What do you think? (Marilla). Well, it doesn't provide much scope for the imagination, that for sure and certain (Anne). You know, it seems to me you should decide for yourself what you want to do and be and set your mind to it (Marilla). Maybe school wouldn't be so bad, now that I have Diana and Ruby (Anne). You've got a good and nimble mind, Anne. I don't see why you should limit it. In my day, we didn't get to choose. I think you should make your own decision (Marilla)."* S1 Eps.4 [00:41:31-00:41:35]

From the dialogue listed above indicates the presence of social stereotypes related to the role and future of a woman who thinks that education is not a priority that a woman must fulfil at that time. Not only in the past, this stereotype still exists among some people today. However, what makes the difference between the past and later times is the progress of women in addressing the discriminatory behavior that befalls them. This transformation can be seen from Anne and Marilla's response to the minister's statement that education is not essential for women who will eventually take care of all domestic affairs. According to Marilla, this idea is old-fashioned and not in line with the times where women have begun

to strive to be free from restrictions that limit their space in determining what they want.

### 3. Building the Principles of Equality in Marriage

Equality defines obtaining equal opportunity between men and women in various aspects. Likewise in the realm of the household. Every couple certainly has values that they want to build in their marriage. To make it happen, it is necessary to have a mutual agreement. The times have changed many things, such as a more advanced standard of living in defining the concept of balance between men and women. In this regard, Anne has a view formed from her own thoughts and some advice she received from people who support freedom for women. She conveyed that opinion to Matthew excitedly. Here is an excerpt from the dialogue illustrating the situation:

*"I think I need to re-imagine the whole marriage/wedding thing (Anne). How so? (Matthew). It isn't about just one brief, shining moment in white, or saying I do. And I'm not going to give myself over to someone and be a prettyish piece of property without a voice or ambition. We will be equals and partners, not just husband and wife (Anne). And neither one should have to abandon their heart's desire. I've come up with a new name for both parties, together, because I believe that they should be named the same (Anne). Well... let's hear it. (Matthew). Life mate. (Anne)."* S2 Eps.8 [00:32:38-00:32:39]

Based on the dialogue listed above, Anne tries to express her opinion about her desire for her future household concept to apply equal rights and roles to live a married life. However, Anne tries to express her opinions and ideas to implement a balanced position without ignoring her husband's position as head of the household. The opinion was conveyed to Matthew by saying:

*"It isn't about just one brief, shining moment in white, or saying I do. And I'm not going to give myself over to someone and be a prettyish piece of property without a voice or ambition. We will be equals and partners, not just husband and wife."*

Anne's idea shows that women do not only have two options in their life, either career or marriage. Anne offers the concept that women can also run both simultaneously.

In addition to the three things above, the representation of 19th century within *Anne with an A* season 3 based on John Fiske's semiotic analysis.



- a. First level; how the event signed. On image it can be seen from clothes (costumes), neighbourhood, dialogue, and expression.

Signed from dialogue that showed the representation of 19th Century can be seen below.

Mrs curthbert : *Little girl!*

Anne : *little girl? I wish i was anything but*

Mrs curthbert : *There is no point for crying, there is a mistake thats all we're not gonna turn you off the door tonight, what is your name?*

Anne : *what is it matter? I wont be here long enough for you to remember*

Mrs curthbert : *Keep your mind and manners and answer the question!*

On 19th century the kid especially little girl forbidden to talk rude or talk without manners to old, especially when they are without exact identity such as orphan. There are still boundaries between rich poor, because status become the power how much they will get respect. It can be seen that Anne tries to talk without manners and then the old woman angry ask her to answer the question. (Anne with an E/Season 3/22:18)



Pict. 1. costumes

The costume also ideals with the 19th Century where people basically using hat to show their status and their dress named *Robe de Cour* or in English named "Court Dress". This kind of dress become the style for woman in 19th century.

- b. Level two, about how the image presented. It can be seen from camera it self, lighting, editing and music track.

The lighting on "Anne with an E" film also represent the vintage style of camera on that time, it can be seen below.



Pict. 2. Lighting and colors

The lighting or the set of light for vintage to represent the 19th century, it looks great. The film using calm and blurry colors, and the most dominant color such as ivory, eggshell , linen, daisy and mocca. This kind of colors mostly appears on vintage style.

- c. level three, about how the the event or the moment being organized supposed to be accepted by audiences. This is about how is representation code connected into social coherence like social class or social tradition while the representation of 19th century withing “Anne with an E” related to the social class it is also can be seen from how the characters wear the dress.



Pict. 3. Farmer dress



Pict. 4. Educated people dress

From the abouve dress, it can be seen that the most glamorous dress can shows that the people is rich or poor.

#### **D. Conclusion**

This research concludes that patriarchal culture plays a role in creating gender discrimination, which is reflected in marginalization, subordination, and sexual violence against women in various aspects of life, such as social, education, work, and household policies. In the films studied, the issues of gender discrimination and liberal feminism are shown through scenes and dialogues that describe the experiences of female characters, such as Anne, Diana, Ruby, and others, which are relevant to the reality of women today.

Despite progress in gender equality, there are still challenges from those who oppose change. To overcome women's powerlessness, the feminism movement is carried out in various ways, such as ideological awareness, the formation of empowerment communities, freedom of speech campaigns, and increasing the role of women in education and politics. These efforts aim to achieve equal rights and increase women's resources to be more active in the public sphere. The feminist movement in this film reflects the real struggle of women in realizing their previously neglected right.

#### **Reference**

- Altunbay, M., & Alaca, J. (2021). THE "IDEAL TEACHER" MODEL PRESENTED IN TEACHER THEMED MOVIES. *Milli Egitim*, 50(230), 409–422.
- Andersson-Bakken, E., Heggernes, S. L., Svanes, I. K., & Tørnby, H. (2022). "But then it will be unfair for those who do not get!" Picturebooks as a starting point for critical thinking in primary school. *Acta Didactica Norden*, 16(2).
- Basinger, J. (2023). The World War II combat film: definition. *Hollywood and War, The Film Reader*.
- Brennen, B. S. (2021). *Qualitative research methods for media studies*. books.google.com. h
- Buttler, T., & Scheurer, J. (2023). Perceptions of pre-service teachers on breakout room micro-Teaching with Zoom. *Perspectives in Education*, 41(1), 155–179.
- Fabianti, R. H., & Putra, F. D. (2021). An analysis of feminism in the movie "The Hunting Ground" reviewed from the semiotics of John Viske. In *Commicast*. eprints.uad.ac.id.
- Gray, J., & Lotz, A. D. (2019). *Television studies*. books.google.com.
- Jiemsak, R., & Jiemsak, N. (2022). The Analysis of Translation Strategies on Thai

- Country Songs with Critical Thinking in the 21st Century. *7th International STEM Education Conference, ISTEM-Ed 2022*. <https://doi.org/10.1109/iSTEM-Ed55321.2022.9920898>
- Lausberg, H. (2023). *Handbook of literary rhetoric: A foundation for literary study*. books.google.com.
- Maguire, K. R. (2023). Pre-service teachers' reflections on content knowledge through microteaching. *Reflective Practice*, 24(2), 153–167.
- Mairc, J. (2020). 5Es 4Cs 21 century skills learning. *2020 International Conference on Cyber Situational Awareness, Data Analytics and Assessment, Cyber SA 2020*.
- Nurwulandari, I., & Fadhilah, S. (2017). The Implementation of Jigsaw Cooperative Learning Model to Improve Reading Skill in SDN Yosodipuro 104 Surakarta. In *International Journal of Engineering .... ijresonline.com*.
- Nurwulandari, I., & Rofiq, M. A. (2021). Developing HOTS-based Model to Improve Mathematical Problem Solving Skill of Elementary School Teacher Education (PGSD) Students. *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*.
- o'g'li, M. J. I., o'g'li, G. A. T., & ... (2023). Methods of converting digital signals to analog (continuous) signals and their essence" to link teaching to pedagogical technologies. *Global Scientific ....*
- Rachman, N. A. (2023). John Fiske's Semiotic Analysis of Moral Education in "Budi Pekerti" Film. *Journal of Language, Communication, and ....*
- Ringrose, J., Mendes, K., Whitehead, S., & ... (2021). Resisting rape culture online and at school: The pedagogy of digital defence and feminist activism lessons. *Violence, Victimisation and ....*
- Timm, A. F., & Sanborn, J. A. (2022). *Gender, sex and the shaping of modern Europe: A history from the French Revolution to the present day*. books.google.com.
- Tomaž, K., & Walanchalee, W. (2020). One does not simply... project a destination image within a participatory culture. *Journal of Destination Marketing & ....*
- Tréré, E. (2018). *Hybrid media activism: Ecologies, imaginaries, algorithms*. books.google.com.
- Vincent, A. (2023). *Modern political ideologies*. books.google.com.

