

Vaguely Familiar: Cinematic Intertextuality in Kevin Sullivan's *Anne of Avonlea*

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Résumé: Cet article examine ce que l'adaptation télévisuelle d'*Anne of Avonlea* doit à des films comme *La Mélodie du bonheur*, *Les Quatre Filles du Docteur March* et *My Brilliant Career*; il dégage le réseau intertextuel complexe et contradictoire dans lequel s'insère cette version audiovisuelle.

Summary: This article explores interconnections between the films *The Sound of Music*, *Little Women*, *My Brilliant Career*, and the Kevin Sullivan adaptation of L.M. Montgomery's *Anne of Avonlea*. Corresponding scenes, with dramatic similarities in characterization, theme, staging, and dialogue, suggest the profound influence of the earlier films upon the later *Anne of Avonlea*. This essay analyses the effects of this intertextuality on the portrayal of Montgomery's text in the visual medium. Both positive and negative implications are addressed, and discussed within the contexts of genre study, authorial influence, and the politics of adaptation.

Comparing the film version of a novel to its often treasured predecessor is not as simple as pointing out what the screenwriter omitted, embellished, or completely invented. Because they are different media, films and novels necessarily place different demands on their audiences. In order to develop a critical approach which can do justice to both the original work and the cinematic adaptation, film theorists have attempted to categorize various types of filmic adaptations. For example, film theorist Louis Gianetti asserts that novels transformed into films take one of three adaptive forms: the "literal" interpretation, the "faithful" interpretation, and the "loose" interpretation (387). Using this framework, I would judge Kevin Sullivan's cinematic interpretation of L.M. Montgomery's novel *Anne of Green Gables* as being a faithful adaptation. While the film reorders minor plot events and eliminates characters to meet with the temporal and spatial demands of the cinematic form, the material which remains is gleaned almost exclusively from Montgomery's text. The characters, the situations they encounter, and much of the

dialogue, is drawn from *Anne of Green Gables* with little modification beyond that required for cinematic adaptation. However, Kevin Sullivan's sequel film to *Anne of Green Gables*, *Anne of Avonlea*, takes a different adaptive form than its predecessor. The sequel film is much "looser" than the "faithful" *Anne of Green Gables*. This second film merges three source texts, *Anne of Avonlea*, *Anne of the Island* and *Anne of Windy Poplars*, into the single film, *Anne of Avonlea*.¹ As a result, major plot events, including the protagonist's four years at the University, are eliminated from the film's structure. Also, multiple characters from the novels are condensed into single-character counterparts in the film. Presumably, these changes would permit greater coverage of the novels in the limited time permitted by the cinematic form.

Yet even if we allow for condensations and restructurings of this sort, the act of adaptation in *Anne of Avonlea* remains something of a mystery. Much of the material within the film cannot be accounted for when looking solely at the Montgomery source texts. Indeed, the most striking aspect of this adaptation is not the material eliminated or reshaped from the source texts, but rather the material inserted in its stead. While the *Anne of Green Gables* film used Montgomery as its primary source, *Anne of Avonlea* goes far afield, inserting plot sequences and dialogue that are never to be found in the original texts. One might guess that under the guise of "creative licence," a writer or director might eliminate textual source material to include material of his/her own creation. Yet a closer investigation of the added material in *Anne of Avonlea* reveals that this "new" material may have its source in previous, and perhaps familiar, films. *Anne of Avonlea* recreates scenes from several other films, which have been taken out of their original contexts and re-dramatized in the context of the Montgomery adaptation. Therefore, to understand the cinematic adaptation of *Anne of Avonlea*, we must look not only to the Montgomery material which it draws upon, but also to the cinematic source material which provides a backdrop for this new cinematic text. I intend to explore the cinematic sources for the *Anne of Avonlea* film, to reveal what is gained and lost by this creation of cinematic intertextuality in the place of strict, "faithful" adaptation.

The film which is most clearly refigured in the adaptation is *The Sound of Music*. There are several scenes which make this intertextual relationship between *The Sound of Music* and *Anne of Avonlea* evident.² One scene occurs when the governess Maria meets her new employer, Captain Von Trapp, and his children. Captain Von Trapp makes the following speech:³

Captain: You are the twelfth in a long line of governesses who have come to look after my children since their mother died. I trust that you will be an improvement over the last one. She stayed only two hours.

Maria: What's wrong with the children, sir?

Captain: There's nothing wrong with the children, only the governesses. They were completely unable to maintain discipline. Without it, this house cannot be properly run. You will please remember that, Fraulein. Every morning you will drill the children in their studies. I will not permit them to dream away their summer holidays. Each afternoon they will march about the grounds, breathing deeply. Bedtime is to be strictly observed, no exceptions. You will see to it that they conduct themselves at all times with the utmost orderliness and decorum. I'm placing you in command.

Now compare the equivalent scene from *Anne of Avonlea*, in which Anne meets her new principal, Katharine Brooke, and her new students. Neither the speech which follows nor the scene itself ever occur in Montgomery's written texts. Here, Anne's new superior instructs Anne as to her duties:

We have fifty young ladies in our charge from the most privileged families in the Maritimes. My methods admonish anything beyond the standards of the utmost decorum. This is not a public school of the sort that you are used to, Miss Shirley. Our students do not require embellishment — simple, straightforward adherence to rules and regulations which I have clearly delineated for you, Miss Shirley. Our students are drilled in their studies at the beginning of each class. Bedtime and mealtime will be strictly observed by our fifteen boarders. You will see to it that the boarders especially adhere to the utmost orderliness. I am placing them under your continual direction.

The repetition of phrases like “utmost orderliness,” “utmost decorum,” “drilled in their studies,” and the reference to bedtime being “strictly observed,” highlight the similarities between the two scenes. But in addition to these linguistic similarities between the two films, there are also similarities in theme, visual content, and scene structure between *The Sound of Music* and the more recent *Anne of Avonlea*.

Consider a scene from *The Sound of Music*, which occurs immediately after Maria has been introduced to the children. Captain Von Trapp blows a military whistle to summon his children. Maria gapes open-mouthed as the children march into the room and form a line. One of the children, Brigita, enters from the right reading a book. She is silently disciplined by her father, and then joins the line. Captain Von Trapp instructs Maria on the use of the military whistle. Maria counters, “I won't need to whistle for them Captain. I'll use their names. Such lovely names.” The Captain insists, handing the whistle to Maria and saying: “You will take this, please. Learn to use it.” After the Captain leaves the room, the child Louisa tries to trick Maria into calling her by an incorrect name. Brigita intercedes, telling Maria, “I'm Brigita. She's Louisa. She's thirteen years old, and you're smart.” Later in the scene, Maria confesses, “I've never been a governess before. I'll need lots of advice.” When the children offer poor advice, the young Greta intercedes, saying,

"Don't you believe a word they say Fraulein Maria," and adds, "because I like you." As the children depart, Maria quickly discovers that one of them has placed a frog in her pocket. The housekeeper quips to Maria: "You're lucky. With Fraulein Helga it was a snake."

In the corresponding *Anne of Avonlea* scenes, Katharine Brooke employs first an electric bell and then a military whistle to summon the school children. The pupils enter and form into lines. The bookish Emmeline Harris scurries in late from the right, and is scolded by Katharine Brooke for her lateness. Emmeline quickly takes her place in line. Miss Brooke instructs Anne that she "must learn to respond to signals from the electric bell." Anne responds: "I would much prefer to invent titles for each group, like Tudor, Kent, and Windsor." Katharine insists: "You must learn to use the modern conveniences of our system." In the scene immediately following, Anne stands before her new class. She tells them that "this is my first time in a private school position, and I hope you will be able to give me lots of assistance." Later, Anne begins to call attendance and several of her new pupils lie about their names. Emmeline Harris, the latecomer from the previous scene, intercedes by saying, "Don't believe any of them Miss Shirley." After a series of fiascoes, including finding a snake in her desk, the class is dismissed. Emmeline consoles Anne Shirley by saying, "I like you, and I think you handled the class very intelligently."

Again, we have linguistic similarities between the scenes. The Captain tells Maria: "You will take this, please. Learn to use it." Miss Brooke tells Anne to "learn to respond to signals" and that "you must learn to use the modern conveniences of our system." Likewise Maria asserts, "I won't need to whistle for them, Captain. I'll use their names," while Anne insists, "I'd much prefer to invent titles for each group." Maria tells the children "I've never been a governess before. I'll need lots of advice," and Anne tells her pupils, "this is my first time in a private school position and I hope you will be able to give me lots of assistance." Finally, both newcomers are defended by children who "like" them, and who comment on their intelligence. But just as significant as these linguistic similarities are the similarities in plot, theme, and visual construction between the two films. These similarities include the use of the whistle as evidence of overzealous, military discipline; the conflict between the creative newcomer and the stern authority figure; the tardy, bookish girl who enters from the right, and ultimately sticks up for the newcomer against trickster peers who conceal their identities; and, of course, the frog in Fraulein Maria's pocket which transforms into the snake in Miss Shirley's desk. Collectively, these similarities in language, symbolism, and visual construction serve to reshape the cinematic *Anne* according to the themes and concerns of the previous film. *The Sound of Music's* concern with an overly militaristic setting which is potentially stifling to the creativity and intelligence of the female protagonist and her bookish child-counterpart is transferred onto Anne's situation. This treatment

restructures the textual concerns, foregrounding and backgrounding themes according to the principles of the filmic, rather than literary, source materials.

These linguistic, staging, and thematic correspondences offer significant evidence that *The Sound of Music* is being invoked in the cinematic adaptation *Anne of Avonlea*. There are additional scenes which offer support to this reading. In the Montgomery adaptation there is an expansion of the romance between Anne and Morgan Harris (who does not exist in the Anne books), which progresses along the same lines as Baroness Schraeder's failed romance with Captain Von Trapp in *The Sound of Music*. In one scene from *The Sound of Music*, the Captain's would-be fiancée tells him: "I do like it here Georg. It's so lovely and peaceful. How can you leave it as often as you do?" The Captain replies: "Oh, pretending to be madly active I suppose. Activity suggests a life filled with purpose." She counters: "Could it be running away? From memories?", and he responds, "Mm Hmm. Perhaps. Or maybe just searching for a reason to stay." She replies: "Oh, I hope that's why you've been coming to Vienna so often." As those who have seen *The Sound of Music* will realize, this sequence exposes the Captain's vulnerability and his sense of placelessness, and sets up the failed courtship of the Baroness and the Captain. These same themes are evident in the equivalent scene in *Anne of Avonlea*. While staying with Morgan Harris in Boston, Anne and he share the following exchange:

Anne: What is it that keeps you away from Kingsport?

Morgan: Keeping occupied with the all-consuming problems of my business.

Anne: Running away?

Morgan: No. Perhaps, holding out for a reason to return.

Anne: Well, I hope you've found one.

These similar sequences highlight the similar themes in both films, including the exoticism of the wealthy, travelling widower who secretly longs for a stable home, the setup of the false courtship, and the female character's ability to read the psyche of her potential love interest. Anne's (and Maria's) affinity to the child(ren) of the love interest is emphasized in the same manner. For instance, Maria chastises the seemingly uncaring Captain about the manner in which he treats his children, concluding her harangue with the plea: "... and the little ones just want to be loved. Please Captain, love them, love them all." Anne chastises Grandmother Harris on the same grounds, saying: "Perhaps you ought to realize that Emmeline only wants to be cared for. If you have any compassion left in your soul you might spend it on her." Likewise, when Maria seeks the source for the Captain's distance from his children, the housekeeper explains: "Ever since the

Captain lost his poor wife, he runs this house as if he were on one of his ships again. Whistles, orders. No more music, no more laughing. Nothing that reminds him of her. Even the children." Maria responds: "But that's so wrong." The situation is nearly identical in the Harris household. Morgan Harris, coincidentally or not, has also been estranged from his child since the death of his lively wife, and his reaction is similar, as Pauline Harris observes: "Morgan ... always ordering people about, no time for anyone else ... Adelaide used to love music and parties ... Now momma won't have anything about that reminds her of what happened to Adelaide." Anne responds: "But that's wrong, Pauline." As previously, these sequences within *Anne of Avonlea* are not drawn from the Montgomery novels, but create a set of circumstances highly comparable to those in *The Sound of Music*. We have the themes of the wandering father, the estranged child, the military household, the false courtship, and the outsider who enters the home to heal these rifts, all conveyed through these few scenes.

Some of these concerns are certainly present in the literary versions of Anne. For example, Anne's failed courtship with the wealthy Roy Gardiner in *Anne of the Island* bears similarity to the failed courtships of Anne and Morgan Harris and even the Captain and Baronness from *The Sound of Music*. Further, there is concern in both novel and film that Anne will marry away from the Island, rather than returning to her Island beau and Island home. Yet even with these similarities, the replaying of these earlier cinematic scenes within *Anne of Avonlea* reshapes these concerns, placing a greater emphasis on the lures of travel, wealth and frivolous life, as well as Anne's potential as a mother, while neglecting the issues of Anne's formal education, her female friendships, and her continual redefinition of issues like "place" and "home" which interact with the failed courtship theme in *Anne of the Island*.⁴ In addition, while Anne does carry an outsider status in the early books in her series, this outsider status is carried well into her adult life and into a variety of settings by the cinematic version of Anne, primarily through her correspondence to filmic Maria. Thus, the various borrowings from *The Sound of Music* shift the thematic emphases of *Anne of Avonlea* from their literary source material, creating a stronger affinity between Anne and her cinematic counterparts, but altering the characterizations and thematics of the novelic Anne.

There are many possible motivations for using intertextual content. Convenience is one possibility. By borrowing sequences from a well-known film, the director instantly invokes the atmosphere of that film within his or her own work. In this sense, the corresponding sequences act as an emotional shortcut for *Anne of Avonlea*. They establish the conflict between the creative woman and the disciplinary environment which she will eventually reform, they establish the false courtship that will later be overturned

for the “true love,” and they forge a quick bond between the newly arrived woman and the children she encounters, based on the audience's familiarity with the earlier film. But beyond the obvious ease of using *The Sound of Music* to establish the tone of *Anne of Avonlea*, this borrowing serves an affiliated function as well. It establishes a context for the film's reception. By drawing on films like *The Sound of Music*, Sullivan offers cues to the viewer as to how his film may be “read,” or viewed. As the previous sequences indicate, the act of cinematic borrowing serves to regulate the viewer's response to the later film, both through its emotional familiarity and through its establishment of a genre context through which the latter film may be understood. *The Sound of Music* is commonly considered a family film, a film which is marketed simultaneously toward adult and children's markets.

The two other films from which *Anne of Avonlea* borrows most heavily are the 1933 version of *Little Women* and the Australian film *My Brilliant Career*.⁵ *My Brilliant Career* falls most clearly into the categories of feminist film or women's film. Feminist films often place female experience at their centre and advocate the equal treatment of women. The “women's film,” while not necessarily advocating equal treatment, also tends to focus on issues of traditional importance to women, including the search for a life partner and “balancing a career with marriage” (Giannetti 417).⁶ *Little Women*, unlike the more overtly feminist *My Brilliant Career*, could be considered in any of the aforementioned film categories. By looking at the similarities between these films and *Anne of Avonlea*, we can discover the cinematic context created for *Anne of Avonlea* through cinematic borrowing, while further exploring the ways in which our understanding of Anne is structured by intertextual content.

There are several crossover scenes between the early *Little Women* (featuring Katharine Hepburn) and *Anne of Avonlea*.⁷ One of the most apparent is the following scene from *Little Women* where Jo has just received payment for a story published in a local paper, the *Spread Eagle*. Laurie sneaks up on Jo, snatching away her check, and beginning the following conversation:

Laurie: Now I'll find out why you come down to this hole every day. Is that why you never have time for me anymore?

Jo: Laurie Laurence, give that to me or I'll never speak to you again.

Laurie: All right, take it. You're a fine one. I thought we weren't to have any secrets from each other.

Jo: Well, this is altogether different.

Laurie: Of course it's different. Just like a girl. Can't keep an agreement.

Jo: Oh, bilge!

Laurie: You'll be sorry. For I was going to tell you something very plummy. A secret. All about people you know, and such fun.

Jo: Oh, what?

Laurie: If I tell you, you must tell me yours.

Jo: Well, you won't say anything at home will you?

Laurie: Who would?

Jo: And you won't tease me in private?

Laurie: I never tease. Fire away.

Laurie reads Jo's acceptance letter and check. Jo explains, "I've sold my story to the *Spread Eagle*." Laurie responds, "Hurrah for Miss March! Hurrah for Miss March! The celebrated American authoress!" Soon after, Laurie shares the secret that John Brooke is infatuated with Meg, and that Brooke keeps her glove as a memento. Laurie comments, "Isn't it romantic?" Jo answers: "Romantic? Rubbish. I've never heard of anything so horrid. I wish you hadn't told me. Of all the sickly sentimental ... Oh, why do things always have to change, just when they're perfect?" Jo continues: "He better keep away from me or I'll tell him what I think of him. Trying to break up other people's happiness and spoil their fun." Laurie and Jo continue to discuss the matter, with Laurie insisting that "you'll find out when someone falls in love with you," and Jo retorting, "I'd like to see anybody try it!" After this exchange, the two run wildly through the woods, ending by breaking up a tryst between Meg and John Brooke.

Though Anne's story is rejected rather than accepted, and she and Gilbert ride bikes instead of running, it is not difficult to see the similarities in the corresponding scene of Anne of Avonlea. Anne receives her rejection letter from the post office, and Gilbert sneaks up behind her and snatches it away, initiating this exchange:

Gilbert: So this is why you keep disappearing on me every time I plan to pick you up after school.

Anne: Gilbert Blythe!

Gilbert: All this secrecy. You never have time to speak to your friends anymore.

Anne: You give that back, or I won't speak to you again.

After further prompting from Gilbert, Anne responds:

Anne: This is a completely personal matter.

Gilbert: Well, I suppose it must be, if you can't keep your word anymore.

Anne: Good grief! You know how to try one's patience, don't you?

Gilbert: Don't get up on your high horse with me, Anne Shirley. I cycled all the way from Carmody to tell you something I found out about Diana Barry today.

Anne: You are a real pill, Gilbert Blythe. What about Diana Barry?

Gilbert: Uh-Uh. Not until you spill the beans.

Anne: You won't say anything to your folks? Or Jane Andrews? Or Charlie Sloane?

Gilbert: On my honor.

Anne: And you promise you won't ever tease me about this?

Gilbert: I wouldn't risk your anger.

Gilbert reads the rejection, and Anne explains:

Anne: You know the story I wrote this spring? I'm attempting to have it published.

Gilbert: Anne, that's tremendous. Listen to this, everybody! Avonlea's public school teacher soon to become world famous Canadian authoress!

At this juncture, Gilbert tells Anne of her best friend Diana's engagement to Fred Wright. Anne bemoans the engagement in a speech which includes the following:

Of all the stupid, sentimental things for Diana to do. I didn't even know it was like this ... well, he better steer clear of me. He has no business ... waltzing in, stealing my best friend. Why do people have to grow up, marry, change?

Gilbert chides Anne by saying "if someone ever admitted that they were head over heels for you, you'd be swept off your feet in a moment." Anne responds, "I would not. And I defy anyone who would try and make me change." Gilbert and Anne then race through the woods on their bicycles, and after a series of romps and spills, they end by breaking up a tryst between the aforementioned Diana and Fred.

As with the previous scenes, these scenes from *Anne of Avonlea* and *Little Women* are clearly linked by similar language, staging, and themes. Both highlight a heroine submitting her work for publication; both heroines are hailed as national "authoresses"; both scenes involve a secret which is revealed; both scenes indicate the heroes' romantic inclinations toward the heroine, which the heroine resists; both scenes address the heroines' resistance to change and the romantic attachments of their friends; both feature a chase scene; and both end by interrupting a romantic tryst. Though Jo finds her sister's relationship "sickly sentimental" and Anne finds her friend's engagement "a stupid, sentimental thing," the differences between

these scenes hardly scratch the surface of their similarities. As previously, this scene in the *Anne of Avonlea* film does not appear in the Anne books, and thus is not drawn from source material in Montgomery's texts. The source material for this scene seems to come more from George Cukor's version of Alcott than Sullivan's reading of Montgomery. Therefore, our response to the cinematic Anne is structured through the viewing lens of Maria Von Trapp and Jo March. Likewise, subsequent readings of the Anne books are likely to be structured by the cinematic viewing, having a potentially profound impact on reader, as well as viewer, responses to Anne Shirley.

These same implications hold true for the following scene from *Little Women*. This scene furthers some of the themes established by the previous scenes. It highlights the heroine's unease with the romantic attachments of her female confidantes and exhibits the heroine's resistance to her would-be suitor. This proposal scene carries these themes effectively, as well as providing a clear verbal link between the film *Little Women* and *Anne of Avonlea*. In *Little Women*, Jo sits alone, moping, during her sister Meg's wedding reception. Laurie goes to comfort her, and his proposal proceeds as follows:⁸

Laurie: You've still got me. I'm not good for much, but I'll stand by you. All the days of my life.

Jo: ... oh, no Laurie. Don't say it.

Laurie: I will. And you must hear me. It's no use, Jo. You've kept away from me ever since I've got back from college. I've loved you ever since I've known you. I couldn't help it. I tried to show it, but you wouldn't let me. But now I'm going to make you hear and give me an answer. I just can't go on so any longer. I know I'm not half good enough for you, but if you love me you can make me anything you like.

Jo: ... you should marry some lovely, accomplished girl who adores you. Someone who'd grace your beautiful house. I shouldn't ... And we should quarrel ... oh, yes, we always have ... and everything would be so horrid if we were ever foolish enough to —

Laurie: ... Don't disappoint us dear, don't. Everybody expects it. Please say you will.

Jo: I can't. Oh Laurie, I'm sorry. So desperately sorry ... I don't know why I can't love you the way you want me to ... I don't think I'll ever marry.

Laurie: Oh, yes you will. Yes, you will. You'll meet some good-for-nothing, no account idiot, and you'll fall in love with him, and work and live and die for him. I know. It's your way ...

After this confrontation, Jo confides to her mother: "I feel as though I'd stabbed my best friend." Though Gilbert does propose and is refused by Anne in *Anne of the Island*, the language of the cinematic proposal is far closer to that

of *Little Women*. Here, the proposal is actually split into two sequences, one following Diana's wedding shower, and the other following the wedding itself. The first exchange proceeds:

Anne: Gil, please don't.

Gilbert: You've been avoiding me all spring, ever since we graduated ... Maybe you don't think I'm good enough for you now, but I will be some day.

Anne: ... But you want someone who'll adore you. Someone who'd be happy just to hang on your arm and build a home for you. I wouldn't ... We'd end up like two old crows fighting all the time ...

Gilbert: Everybody expects it ... Anne, I've loved you as long as I can remember ... please say yes.

Anne: ... Gil, I'm so desperately sorry.

The second proposal entails Anne telling Gilbert that his date "looks like a lovely and accomplished young lady." Anne also insists that she "can never, never love you [Gilbert] in the way that you want me to" and that she "won't ever marry." Gilbert taunts her: "You'll marry all right. Some fool who'll sit around and read Tennyson by firelight, no doubt ... I know you." In a separate scene, Anne laments to her friend: "Diana, I feel like I'd cut off his right arm."⁹

The similarities between these proposals abound. Both male characters debate whether they are "good enough" for the female protagonist; both women have "kept away" or "stayed away," perhaps to prevent the forthcoming proposal; both focus on the "lovely, accomplished" girl that the suitor presumably should marry; the female characters fear a life where they would "quarrel" or be "fighting all the time" with the spouse; the male character insists that he has loved "ever since I've known you" or "as long as I can remember" and that "everybody expects it"; both female characters counter that they "can never love you (in) the way (that) you want me to" and that they'll "never marry"; and both are "desperately sorry." There are a few minor differences in these sequences. The intervening dialogue, which has been cut here, varies between the two sequences; Laurie's "good-for-nothing, no account idiot" becomes a "fool who'll sit and read Tennyson by firelight"; and though both heroines feel as though they had maimed their suitors, Jo has "stabbed" where Anne has dismembered. But the differences between these sequences are overwhelmed by their apparent likenesses.

Recurrent plot, theme, and character aspects surface which are invoked by intertextuality. The quest to find the ideal mate, who appreciates the artistic impulses of the woman, is a recurrent theme in several of these sequences. The heroine's hesitancy to marry is also highlighted. Moreover,

the heroine's potential career is emphasized, but it is done so alongside her expertise with children, and thus her potential as a mother. These potentially conflicting themes of creativity, constraint, marriage, and career, have implications for the literary, as well as cinematic, sources for *Anne of Avonlea*.

In the book version of *Anne of Avonlea*, and the subsequent books in the Anne series, Anne Shirley's literary ambitions lessen as her romance with Gilbert Blythe intensifies. But in *Little Women*, Jo's writing career is not sacrificed to her marriage. In the film version of *Anne of Avonlea*, Sullivan reintroduces the literary ambitions which fade in the Anne books, making it possible for Anne to succeed as both an author and a helpmate to her eventual husband, Gilbert. The intertextuality between *Anne of Avonlea* and *The Sound of Music* emphasized the creativity of the heroine, her abilities with children, her potential to reform a potentially restrictive environment, and her discovery of a congenial mate. This intertextuality with *Little Women* adds another level to this portrayal. Likening *Anne of Avonlea* to *Little Women*, a text which permits its heroine both career and marriage, makes it possible to rewrite a similarly happy ending for Anne as for Jo. This borrowing strengthens Anne's role as writer-heroine, by drawing on a familiar writer-heroine of the past. It recreates the possibility of a marriage which will be supportive, rather than oppressive, of the heroine's creativity and career goals. Given that the *Anne of Avonlea* adaptation is geared toward a 1980s audience, the creation of a heroine who pursues both marriage and career simultaneously speaks to contemporary visions of womanhood as well as drawing upon these same issues from the time of the novel's release.

The similarities between *Anne of Avonlea* and *My Brilliant Career* intensify this treatment of the marriage/career theme. Like both Anne and Jo, the protagonist of *My Brilliant Career* is a young, female writer, facing the prospects of career and marriage. But unlike the book-version of Anne, who chooses marriage over career, Sybylla of *My Brilliant Career* chooses career over marriage. By borrowing from this film, Sullivan can highlight this theme of the writer-heroine which he has reintroduced into the Anne text. But Sullivan also recreates the text of *My Brilliant Career* to a new end, reinforcing marriage as well as career within *Anne of Avonlea*.

There is one major scene which appears in both *My Brilliant Career* and *Anne of Avonlea*, but this scene is an important one. In *My Brilliant Career*, the scene in question occurs after Sybylla has refused her friend Harry's proposal of marriage. Harry's mother comes to comfort the distraught Sybylla, and she initiates the following exchange with Sybylla (ellipses added):

Mother: The boy's an idiot. But you did lead him on.

Sybylla: I didn't mean to. I'm a misfit ...

Mother: True.

Sybylla: Then why me?

Mother: Because he loves you. And I think you love him. And you make all the other misses who've been through here look like so many paling, insipid nobodies. Which they undoubtedly are.

Sybylla: But why does it always have to come down to marriage?

Mother: ... Sybylla, don't throw away reality for some impossible dream.

Sybylla: It isn't impossible.

Here, the "impossible dream" is a writing career. Sybylla proves that her dream is possible by publishing her work at the narrative's conclusion. But *Anne of Avonlea* remakes this scene to encompass both marriage and career. In this instance, Anne and Gilbert have argued over Anne's writing style, and the best way to market her stories. In the Anne books, this argument is presented by Mr. Harrison and not Gilbert Blythe, and Anne never fully acquiesces to the criticisms he voices. In the film version, Anne, upset over this argument, pours out her heart to her guardian Marilla, acknowledging that Gilbert has been correct in his criticisms. Subsequently, the following exchange occurs, initiated by Anne's question:

Anne: Why can't he act sensible instead of acting like a sentimental schoolboy?

Marilla: Because he loves you.

Anne: He loves me? I can't know why.

Marilla: Because you make Josie Pye, and Ruby Gillis, and all of those wishy washy young ladies who've waltzed by him, look like spineless nothin'.

Marilla eventually concludes her speech by saying: "Don't toss it away, Anne, for some ridiculous ideal that doesn't exist."

In this version, the "ridiculous ideal" is an ideal of a romantic suitor, rather than a career ambition. Whereas Sybylla was encouraged to dismiss her dreams of writing, Anne is encouraged to dismiss her romantic sensibilities, and to choose a suitor who is supportive (though revisionary) of her literary ambitions. By borrowing from the film *My Brilliant Career*, *Anne of Avonlea* reinforces Anne's career choice, and the role of the writer-heroine, within the film. But by reshaping the scene as he does, Sullivan simultaneously reinforces the relationship with Gilbert, opening up the possibility of a marriage and a career which are not mutually exclusive, a possibility which was closed to the Anne of Montgomery's written text. Yet while *The Sound of Music*, *Little Women* in both its literary and cinematic forms, and the various textual versions of *My Brilliant Career* show the complexities and the possible difficulties faced by women who pursue their artistic ambitions while also seeking a marriage accepting of those ambitions, the cinematic version

of *Anne of Avonlea* draws upon these pre-established models to ease the transition of the cinematic Anne into the career-and-marriage minded protagonist palatable to the late-twentieth-century audience.

There are broader cinematic implications to this borrowing, and it is in this aspect that *Anne of Avonlea* gains the most from its technique. By drawing on *The Sound of Music*, *Little Women* and *My Brilliant Career* as resources, Sullivan aligns his own film with films of this nature, creating a context for the reception of his own film within the framework established by these earlier films. The films *The Sound of Music* and *Little Women* clearly fall into the genre category of family films. Creating an intertextuality through *Anne of Avonlea* heightens the genre similarities between the films. Through this action, Sullivan creates a “familiarity” of his own, a new genre of family films comprising the films chosen as source material, and shaped by *Anne of Avonlea*’s contribution to this genre. This act of borrowing asks us to look back upon these films and consider them as a group. Thus, *Anne of Avonlea* defines, draws on, and refigures the genre category “family film” by its intertextual response to that genre. But in addition to their classification as family films, I would argue that *The Sound of Music*, *Little Women*, *My Brilliant Career* and *Anne of Avonlea* could all be considered feminist films. Each emphasizes a strong female protagonist, the artistic career of this protagonist, the search for a supportive life partner, the tension between marriage and career, and in several cases, a female-centred community working with this protagonist. I find that *Anne of Avonlea*’s use of intertextuality paves the way for our interpretations of all of these films as both feminist and family-oriented. *Anne of Avonlea*’s borrowing creates the context for its own reception and interpretation. But it also identifies a tradition of feminist family films in retrospect, and encourages us to understand the Montgomery adaptation within this context, through repeated reference to this created genre.

Anne of Avonlea’s intertextuality has one additional function. By drawing on films like *Little Women* and *My Brilliant Career*, which are themselves adapted from novels predating the novels of the Anne series, *Anne of Avonlea* recreates the literary environment into which the novels *Anne of Green Gables* and its successor *Anne of Avonlea* were released.¹⁰ The same themes highlighted by the filmic adaptation of *Anne of Avonlea* are very much alive in the nineteenth-century literary traditions represented by *Little Women* and *My Brilliant Career*. By establishing this literary context in the course of his work, Sullivan produces a true “period” film, which acknowledges the very literary debates and themes that Montgomery addressed in her text. The film version, then, illustrates the literary traditions within which we might place Montgomery, as well as the concerns of her era, through its choice of source texts. So while we lose material from the Montgomery novels, the material

which appears in its stead may recapture the literary-historical moment of Montgomery's texts even more effectively than a "faithful" adaptation of those texts could. Furthermore, *Anne of Avonlea's* intertextuality remedies a loss from the past, by resurrecting Anne-as-author, and restoring her to her place among the other important writer-heroines of her time, though it does so in a peculiarly 1980s fashion.

So, in my view, there are gains to be made by choosing the "looser" form of cinematic adaptation. The film gains by speaking to contemporary as well as historical-literary themes, by producing an effective "period piece," and by reshaping the cinematic genres which it both draws upon and contributes to. However, these gains do come at a price. The cost assessed depends largely on the experience and background of the viewing audience. For those who come to *Anne of Avonlea* with a preformed love for Montgomery's works, the result may be a devastating loss of Montgomery material which outweighs the possible gains of producing a genre-shaping period film. For those who come to *Anne of Avonlea* with little foreknowledge of Montgomery, the loss is one of never knowing the complexities of Montgomery's treatment of Anne's later years. Though this loss may be remedied if readers are brought to Montgomery's works through the film, even this reading will be shaped by prior exposure to the filmic interpretation of Montgomery's texts. But there is a cinematic as well as a literary loss at stake here. The greatest benefits of Sullivan's adaptive form are available to those who come to *Anne of Avonlea* with a solid grounding in the films upon which it draws. These viewers can then see how the previous films are being shaped and altered, and can admire the craft of the adaptation without losing the value of its cinematic predecessors. For those who come to this adaptation with no foreknowledge of the prior films, or with a viewing knowledge so distant as to be largely unconscious, the nuances of the cinematic adaptation are lost. In this scenario, all the benefits of recreating a literary context and a cinematic genre are lost, and the audience is left with the unmuscl'd skeletons of past films, masquerading as living, original texts.

Novels and films are different. To dismiss a cinematic adaptation solely on the grounds of its dissimilarity to a novel seems imprudent. Just as each reader will interpret a text from her/his own perspective, each film adaptation will reflect the perspective of its creators, and cannot be expected to encompass all interpretive possibilities. However, it is essential to look at the principles of construction in any film in order to comprehend the ways it acts upon its viewing audience. In the case of *Anne of Avonlea*, a full understanding of its cinematic intertextualities paves the way for comprehending the manner in which our own interpretations of Anne, and our responses to her as a model of womanhood, may be constructed through the use of intertextual content.

Notes

- 1 *Anne of Avonlea* is the title used for the release of this videocassette in the United States, the version upon which this analysis is based, and thus this title is used for the balance of this paper. In Canada, the identical film was released on videocassette under the title *Anne of Green Gables — The Sequel*.
- 2 Though some of the similarities discussed here will be apparent from this written version of the text, I strongly suggest that those interested in this topic view these scenes on video to achieve the fullest effect of the comparison.
- 3 The dialogue attributed to these films has been transcribed from the videocassette versions of these films. Format and punctuation may not reflect the original screenplays for the films discussed. Descriptions of staging and visual aspects are my own, based on my own viewings of the films. The scenes discussed in this essay have been condensed in order to highlight their similarities. Though all the dialogue discussed appears in the films in the order in which it is conveyed, intervening dialogue has been removed in some cases. Speeches which have been shortened, or wherein intervening dialogue has been removed, are marked with ellipses.
- 4 For additional discussion of these themes in *Anne of the Island* see Rubio and Waterston.
- 5 I am indebted to Christine McCann and Beth Davidson, formerly of the Kindred Spirits electronic mail discussion group, for their suggestions of films and scenes for this paper, most particularly for calling my attention to *My Brilliant Career* through e-mail discussion.
- 6 For the purpose of this analysis, feminist film theory is discussed primarily in relation to characterization, theme, and genre. However, there are a wide breadth of concerns addressed in contemporary feminist film theory, which deal with a variety of visual and theoretical issues surrounding women and film. For additional reading in the area of feminist film theory, see Haskell, and Mulvey.
- 7 Some of the dialogue noted here may have its original source in the novel *Little Women*. However, due to the similarities in staging and non-dialogue aspects of the scenes, I have chosen to discuss the George Cukor directed film version of *Little Women* as the source text for *Anne of Avonlea*. There is some discussion of the novel at the end of this essay.
- 8 Again, the scenes have been shortened in order to highlight their similarities. Intervening dialogue has been removed in some cases. Ellipses have been added to mark the removal of text.
- 9 There are additional corresponding scenes between the various films discussed. Jo's reunion with Laurie after his marriage bears comparison with Anne's reunion with Gilbert at the gazebo in Kingsport; the theatrical scene from *Little Women*, where Jo teaches Amy how to faint, can be likened to Anne's instructions to her Kingsport students when they are rehearsing *Mary, Queen of Scots*; also, the Captain's return in *The Sound of Music*, where the children's canoe capsizes, bears a similar feeling of havoc to the scene in *Anne of Avonlea* where Morgan Harris returns from abroad to find sheep running loose in his yard.
- 10 The written versions of *Little Women* and *My Brilliant Career* first appear in 1868 and 1901 respectively. For discussion of correspondences between the novel version of *Little Women* and the Anne books, see MacLulich.

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