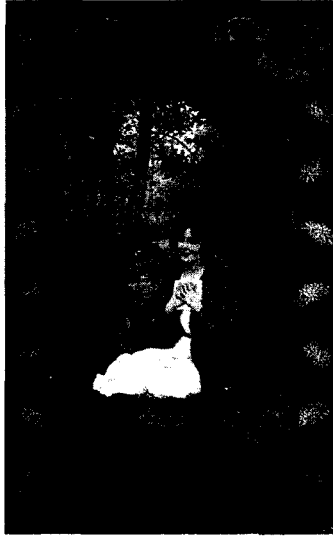


Walter's Closet

• Benjamin Lefebvre •



Résumé: L'auteur soutient que la vie et la mort du personnage Walter Blythe au centre du roman *Rilla d'Ingleside* de L.M. Montgomery sont peu typiques à l'intérieur des usages du Bildungsroman pour lesquels ses oeuvres narratives sont connues. Sa représentation habituelle de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard comme espace familial idyllique sert plutôt dans cet ouvrage à symboliser la protection physique et émotive ainsi que l'innocence sexuelle d'un personnage que l'on perçoit comme «différent». Cette différence n'est pas sans rappeler la thématique du placard homosexuel.

Summary: This paper argues that the life and death of Walter Blythe at the centre of L.M. Montgomery's novel *Rilla of Ingleside* are completely atypical within the boundaries of the Bildungsroman for which Montgomery's work is renowned. Instead of representing Prince Edward Island as an Edenic concept of home and family, here Montgomery employs the imagery of the Island to symbolize the physical safety, the emotional security, and the sexual innocence of a character who is always seen as "different" in ways that are often associated with the homosexual closet.

At first glance, the death of Walter Blythe at the centre of L.M. Montgomery's novel *Rilla of Ingleside* seems to have as its primary purpose to emblemize what millions of Canadians lost during World War I: Walter leaves behind a heartbroken family, an unfinished university degree, an artistic potential that will never be developed, and the unrequited feelings from a young woman that are best left unexpressed. Beneath the surface, however, Walter's life and death are completely atypical within the boundaries of the *Bildungsroman* for which Montgomery's work is renowned, where the girl marries the boy as a reward for finding an outlet for self-expression with the lush scenery of Prince Edward Island representing an Edenic concept of home and family. With Walter, Montgomery employs the imagery of the Island to symbolize his physical safety, his emotional security and his sexual innocence, in ways that are often associated with the homosexual closet.¹

Mary Rubio points out that Montgomery, like other female writers of her time, incorporates "serious social criticism into her novels" while "remaining within the confines of genteel female respectability" (8); at the same time, Elizabeth Epperly suggests that "Montgomery's stories often support [...] stereotypes about men and women and the supposed battle of the sexes" (9). But Walter is no typical Montgomery hero.² The second son of Anne Shirley and Gilbert Blythe is uninterested in medicine and football and courting girls as are his brother Jem and his childhood pal, Kenneth Ford. Instead, despite Walter's "passionate love for beauty" (RV 17) and his ambition to be a poet, he seems completely blind to the interest of shy, angelic Una Meredith. He is the sensitive, misunderstood boy-poet who struggles in many ways to fit in within a society that seems keen to reject him. Heroines like Anne Shirley and Emily Byrd Starr are allowed to explore their own unconventional identity through their writing without straying too far from conventionality; with Walter, the gap between conventionality and unconventionality is not as easily bridged.³ This discrepancy is evidenced in the three books in which Walter appears at three stages of his life: as a child (ages six to eleven) in *Anne of Ingleside*, as a young adolescent (ages twelve to thirteen) in *Rainbow Valley*, and as a young adult (ages 20 to 22) in *Rilla of Ingleside*. Any study of these three novels together, however, is complicated by the fact that they were not written in sequence; consequently, this paper will focus first on *Rainbow Valley* (1919), followed by *Rilla of Ingleside* (1921),⁴ and will consider *Anne of Ingleside* to be a "prequel" to these first two that was published in 1939.⁵

Always interested in creating contrasts between her characters, Montgomery deliberately makes Walter completely unlike his older brother Jem, a more secondary character.⁶ Although not done so explicitly, the initial descriptions of the two boys at the beginning of *Rainbow Valley* immediately set them up as total opposites, setting the tone for the reader's assessment of their relationship as it develops throughout three books: Jem, who is every-

thing boyish and masculine, approaches his existence scientifically and excels in mathematics, while Walter, described as girly and milksoppish, a “hop out of kin” as far as looks are concerned (17), leans toward poetry and the emotional. Jem eventually goes to medical school, following in his father’s footsteps, while Walter has inherited the “vivid imagination and passionate love for beauty” from his mother (17). Walter reads the classics as a child and has a sophisticated understanding for the story of “The Pied Piper” and the chivalry poetry of Tennyson, while Jem’s interest in storybooks about pirates and soldiers is decidedly naive and child-like. Jem is a chieftain in school, conforming to a child’s expectation of a child, while Walter is “not thought very highly of” (17).

This contrast becomes more significant when they reach adulthood. At the news that England has declared war on Germany, Jem immediately announces his intention to enlist “as coolly as if he were arranging the details of a picnic” (RI 41) whereas Walter hides behind the typhoid from which everyone believes he has not fully recovered and retreats to the innocence and privacy of Rainbow Valley. Jem’s naiveté, influenced by his childhood fantasies of being a soldier brought upon by the books he has read, is emblematic of the “unthinking enthusiasm” of the thousands of young soldiers who enlisted, without whom “the war could not have been fought” (Epperly 104). Walter, on the other hand, is the only younger person (with the exception of Gertrude Oliver) who initially grasps the implications of the declaration of war with none of Jem’s childlike enthusiasm:

Before this war is over [...] every man and woman and child in Canada will feel it — you, Mary, will feel it — feel it to your heart’s core. You will weep tears of blood over it. The Piper has come — and he will pipe until every corner of the world has heard his awful and irresistible music. It will be years before the dance of death is over — years, Mary. And in those years millions of hearts will break. (33-34)

Walter’s attitudes about fighting and pain are particularly important in a novel in which the roles of men and women are so clearly defined. Masculine Jem’s assumption of war as adventure is deliberately contrasted to Walter’s paralyzing fear, not of death itself but of being “mangled or blinded, to keep on dying.” Walter’s conclusion — “I should have been a girl,” which he expresses in a “burst of passionate bitterness” (RI 46) — is reminiscent of another atypical Montgomery male, Captain Jim, who confides to Anne in *Anne’s House of Dreams*:

I don’t think I’m a coward, Mistress Blythe — I’ve looked an ugly death in the face more than once without blenching. But the thought of a lingering death does give me a queer, sick feeling of horror. (199)

Walter's conviction of his cowardice makes him feel inadequate in his masculinity and leads to morbidity and self-loathing.

The incident of the fist-fight with Dan Reese is the first instance in which the twelve-year-old Walter is called upon to confront his feelings of cowardice and to defend himself, an episode often referred to in *Rilla of Ingleside*. Epperly calls it the "central dramatic event" of *Rainbow Valley* and "Montgomery's allegory for the First World War," and describes it as "A dastard belittles faith and womanhood [...] and a young knight vanquishes him" (97). But this episode has much more to it than that. The fist-fight is brought about not only by Dan's insult toward Faith Meredith and toward Walter's mother, but by a feeling of inadequacy that Dan instills in him and which will follow Walter to adulthood. Dan insults Faith by calling her "Pig-girl" in reference to an earlier episode in which Faith and Walter tear down Main Street on pigs (and for which Walter takes the blame even though it was Faith's idea). Faith does not expect Walter to defend her, since "he seemed to her an inhabitant of a world of his own, where different traditions prevailed," nor does she think him cowardly; but Walter feels inadequate because Jem would have defended Faith and because he simply cannot "call names," an ability of which Dan has "unlimited command" (111).

Walter is finally provoked into pushing Dan off the fence, not by Dan's insult to Faith and to Walter's mother, but by Dan's unabashed "hello, Miss Walter," and the insulting chant, "Coward, cowardly-custard / Stole a pot of mustard / Coward, cowardly-custard!" (120). Why, then, does Walter repeatedly insist he is fighting Dan to defend his mother and Faith, with no mention of his own dignity? Walter's terror of being hurt and defeated and shamed, deliberately contrasted with Jem's simultaneous daydream of being a famous general, is something he cannot even express in words: "Talking of it seemed to give it a reality from which he shrank" (123).

Walter's repeated blows and the savageness with which he fights illustrate his unconscious desire to prove his masculinity, to react against the feelings of inadequacy that Dan instills in him. Despite the fact that he wins the fight, however, Walter is still not like other boys. His classmates are terrified of him; none of them have ever dreamed that "Miss Walter" could be capable of such a "savage fury" (124). When it is all over, when Walter sees the blood and the reactions of his classmates, he retreats to Rainbow Valley and feels "none of the victor's joy" but instead a sense of "duty done and honour avenged" (125). Whose honour? His own? Montgomery does not make it clear: Walter realizes that "His lip was cut and swollen and one eye felt very strange" (125), making his ability to see and to express himself temporarily marred.

Susan Baker, the housekeeper, is glad he has fought: "Perhaps it may knock that poetry nonsense out of him" (*RV* 126). Poetry, then, is a euphemism for Walter's lack of masculinity, based on the often violent ways his

ambition is perceived. Susan's brutal honesty is important given the position she is in as the only adult in the household who does not give the unconditional love of a parent. She tells twelve-year-old Walter *to his face* that his recurring toothache, which is agonizing, is the result of "sitting up in the cold garret [...] writing poetry trash," that poetry is "mostly a lot of lies," and hopes the pain "would be a lesson" to him (109). What kind of damage is this likely to do to a sensitive child's self-esteem, especially considering that Walter himself repeats this encounter to Faith in his own words? Susan's distrust of anything poetic, a standard, old-school Presbyterian response, is clear from her first appearance in *Anne's House of Dreams*, but her intention to "hope and pray that blessed boy will outgrow the tendency" is uncalled for: writing poetry is not considered a "tendency," nor should a twelve-year-old boy's doing so be seen as such a big deal in itself. Why, then, is Susan's opinion of Walter's "silly rhymes" emphasized more than Anne's? Susan finally decides that "If he does not [outgrow it] — we must see what emulsion and cod-liver oil will do" (51), once again making a direct link between poetry and the physical body. Why does she see writing poetry as a manifestation of a physical ailment, like constipation, that she wants to flush out of him?⁷

As an adult, Walter himself ties his poetry to his self-respect, and, with that, to the rejection of the feelings of inadequacy that have been instilled in him since early childhood and particularly since the war began; when he enlists, he tells Rilla that "tonight for the first time since Jem left I've got back my self-respect. I could write poetry" (RI 118).

Despite the seven-year gap between *Rainbow Valley* and *Rilla of Ingleside*, Walter changes very little during this time. At 20, he is identical to when he is thirteen — lying on the grass, reading poetry, daydreaming, and commenting on how beautiful everything is (Jem's attitudes about war, as mentioned earlier, have not matured from childhood either). Walter is, in a sense, a child grown older, which is exactly how Montgomery describes the kind of *female* adolescent character she has to write about, the "sweet insipid thing [...] to whom the basic realities of life [...] are quite unknown" (*My Dear Mr. M.* 119). This description applies to Walter as well: while fifteen-year-old Rilla longs for beaux in the plural (13) and for Kenneth Ford to ask her to dance, Walter, at 20, seems to be totally oblivious to the possibility of participating in romantic/sexual relationships in general and to Una Meredith in particular, something that does not seem to concern anyone else.⁸ In fact, Walter and Una are the only two of Montgomery's more prominent characters who grow up together but whose relationship does not evolve toward courtship and marriage. Not because of a mutual lack of interest: we are told early on that Una "had a secret, carefully-hidden fancy for Walter Blythe that nobody but Rilla ever suspected." What is not clear is why "Rilla sympathized with it and wished Walter would return it" (RI 24). She writes in her journal that Una is just a perfect angel but that Walter "never seems to think

of her in that way" (70). Why doesn't he see her — or anyone — "in that way," given the repeated emphasis on his love and appreciation for all things beautiful? Why is Rilla resigned to the fact that Una's love will always be helplessly unrequited?⁹

Walter seems quite sure of himself the night before he leaves for war when he says to Rilla in private, "I'm not leaving any girl to break her heart about me — thank God for that" (124). But if he is unaware of Una's feelings for him, why is it that, when he leaves, he kisses her with the "warm, comradely kiss of a brother," especially considering that "He had never kissed her before" and "she had only offered her hand"? (127). Not only does this kiss validate Rilla's suspicions of Una's feelings for him and gives her a reason to give her Walter's posthumous letter later on, but Montgomery is giving Walter a final opportunity to prove his masculinity in public. Because of this demonstration, Walter is able to leave behind earlier impressions of him as someone whose masculinity is defective, and allows the community to see him for the last time as a young man who has finally entered the heterosexual order which he has so far resisted.

The final item of comparison between Jem and Walter is made immediately after Walter's death by an incidental character who comments that "It's such a blessing that it was Walter [who was killed] and not Jem. Walter was a member of the church, and Jem wasn't" (189). This may appear to be merely a passing statement, but often, Montgomery says much more in such throwaway remarks as these than meets the eye. Nearly all of Montgomery's characters go to church, and to many of them, religion is a very important priority. Whether they are actual *members* of the church, however, while it is implied, is only pointed out in a few occasions throughout Montgomery's body of work to promote social standing, social conformity, or an assurance that church members will find salvation in the afterlife. When Aunt Becky dies in *A Tangled Web*, William Y. is "by no means [...] sure" of Becky's salvation because "she wasn't a member of the church" (95). Ruby Gillis, dying of consumption in *Anne of the Island*, is afraid of death itself but not afraid that she may not go to heaven; after all, "I'm a church member" (105).¹⁰

Why, then, is Walter a member of the church and Jem not — especially considering that by this time Jem is engaged to the Presbyterian minister's daughter, Faith? Is Walter more concerned about his salvation than is his older brother? Or, from another angle, is there something about Walter that is religiously problematic, making his salvation questionable? (At the same time, what does this say about Jem's apparent rejection of religion in favour of science?) Considering Montgomery's and the narrator's never-ending concern about Walter's soul, this passing remark merits a closer examination. During Walter's first appearance in *Rainbow Valley*, we are told that "with Walter food for the soul always took first place" over food for the flesh (19); is Montgomery commenting on Walter's future sexual appetites as

well? Later, following the fist-fight with Dan Reese, Walter confides in Mr. Meredith, the minister, leading him “into some sealed and sacred chambers of the lad’s soul wherein not even Di [his sister and confidante] had ever looked” (86). What kind of secret cannot be revealed to anyone (including the reader) but the minister?

This concern returns with renewed intensity in *Rilla of Ingleside*. Fifteen-year-old Rilla feels excluded when she sees Walter and Di “together, deep in confidential conversation” (24) and suspects that Walter tells more of his secrets to Di than to her, even though she vows she would “never tell them to a single soul” (13). When Rilla points out that Walter is not strong enough to fight, Walter argues, “Physically I am. Sound as a bell. The unfitness is in the soul and it’s a taint and a disgrace” (90). When he finally does enlist, it is “for my own sake — to save my soul alive. It will shrink to something small and mean and lifeless if I don’t go” (118).

And of course Susan Baker is there, as if on cue: “It may cure him of being a poet, at least [...] and that would be something” (120).¹¹

In 1920, after finishing *Rilla of Ingleside*, Montgomery vowed that she was done with the “Anne gang” forever (*SJ* II 390; *My Dear Mr. M.* 103). Fifteen years and many books later, she finally broke that vow and wrote two more *Anne* novels that fill the gaps between the first six. In *Anne of Ingleside* (1939), the second of these two books and a “prequel” to *Rainbow Valley*, Montgomery revises the continuity of the overall story by writing about Anne’s children when they are very young, adding to what we already know of Walter and his siblings, whose characters are already defined. Walter’s “future” death, already known to the reader, is more obviously foreshadowed; although episodes dealing prominently with Walter are few, questions of gender identity, the continued comparison of Jem and Walter, the appropriateness of his ambition to be a poet and the soul/body dichotomy are more readily explored, particularly by minor and incidental characters and by the intrusive narrator. Before either Jem or Walter is eight years old, we see that Jem is already conforming to traditional gender norms while Walter has subconsciously rejected them: when Jem fails to make another boy’s dog love him, he wishes he were a girl “so’s I could cry *and* cry!” (137); Walter’s eyes fill with tears at the very sight of Aunt Mary Maria (22). An incidental character insists that Walter is a sissy because “he writes po’try. Do you know what I’d do if I’d a brother that writ po’try? I’d drown him ... like they do kittens” (173). Leslie Ford looks at him and realizes “he had the face of a genius ... the remote, detached look of a soul from another star. Earth was not his habitat” (86). Another incidental character remarks that the six-year-old Walter “did be having an old soul in a young body,” to which the intrusive narrator adds, “It might be that the old soul knew too much for the young brain to understand always” (37), which is linked to his choice of reading material in *Rainbow Valley* and makes him increasingly emblematic and less real.

Walter's lack of masculinity is noticed even by Jem when they play pirates and Walter balks at walking the plank. Jem wonders "if Walter really was enough of a stalwart to be a buccaneer, though he smothered the thought loyally and had more than one pitched and successful battle with boys in school who called Walter 'Sissy Blythe'" (129).¹² Looking back to Walter's fist-fight in *Rainbow Valley* where the brave, active man rescues the helpless, passive woman, Montgomery is now giving Walter a role that is traditionally female, the role that Faith played twenty years earlier. Further, not only is Walter compared to Jem, but now Anne compares him to the rest of her children, commenting that "Walter is by way of being a poet. He isn't like any of the others" (12).

The first episode in which Walter is featured prominently is when he is sent off to the Parkers just as Anne is about to give birth to Rilla, an incident that Genevieve Wiggins calls "a serious failure on the part of those model parents Anne and Gilbert, who give no reason for his being sent away" (82); we the readers are aware there is reluctance to speak about childbirth and a worry about Anne's health, but the six-year-old Walter, from whose perspective we read this, is unaware of these things. It is also a devastating moment for young Walter, who "had again hard work to keep from crying" because Gilbert drives away without saying goodbye. "It was only too plain that nobody loved him. Mother and Father used to, but they didn't any longer" (39). Further, sending Walter away for two weeks, which terrifies him, is an experience that both Gilbert and Aunt Mary Maria hope will cure some of his flaws. During a discussion in which Anne worries about Walter who is "so very sensitive and imaginative," Gilbert argues that he is "Too much so" and seems keen on changing him: "I believe that child is afraid to go upstairs in the dark. It will do him worlds of good to give and take with the Parker fry for a few days. He'll come home a different child," after which Anne, of course, realizes that "No doubt Gilbert was quite right" (36). Aunt Mary Maria, who finds Walter "far too nervous and high-strung," echoes this hope to Walter's face: "Well, Mrs. Dr. Parker will probably cure you of some of your notions" (37).

Walter feels threatened and vulnerable when Mrs. Parker leaves him to play with her children and their cousins, including two boys who are several years older. He "did not like [Andy Parker's] looks from the first" and doesn't care for Fred Johnson either "though he was a good-looking chap" (39). Andy, who "had made up his mind that Walter was a sissy," decides to tease and threaten him, asking Walter how he would like being pinched black and blue. He and Walter even argue whose father is the better-looking (43). Later, Walter is terrified by the other children's announcement that his mother is about to die, a deliberate attempt to frighten him, and feels scared because he has to sleep alone for the first time: there is "Always Jem or Ken near him, warm and comforting" (46). He then sneaks out of the house and walks the six miles home in the middle of the night, confronting his fear

of the dark and of being out alone. When he is safely home, he gravely admits to Susan that he “suffered awful agony of mind,” to which the intrusive narrator adds, “But nobody must ever know how scared he had really been” (52). This need for secrecy and discretion about his feelings, as seen in *Rainbow Valley* and *Rilla of Ingleside*, will follow him throughout his life.

So far it has been stated that Walter is an atypical male Montgomery character, one who is noticeably unlike other boys, who seems as asexual at 20 as when he is thirteen, whose ambition to be a poet is widely frowned upon, whose masculinity is perceived as inadequate and whose salvation could be seen as a cause for concern. By making Walter the hero of *Rilla of Ingleside*, Montgomery is expanding the notion of manhood, widening the boundaries to encompass this non-traditional male. Not only is Walter described explicitly as feminine and artistic, poetic and romantic, stereotypes associated with male homosexuality, but Montgomery does not show him taking an interest in girls, not allowing him to enter the heterosexual dynamic. This asexuality is a deliberate contrast with other Montgomery males, such as Teddy Kent and Hilary Gordon, who are also sensitive and emotional but whose heterosexuality is never questioned. Montgomery chooses not to give Walter this heterosexuality. Walter goes to war to prove to himself and to others that he is a man, and, in doing so, he is destroyed.

Walter’s closet, then, is Prince Edward Island — or, more specifically, Rainbow Valley, which encompasses everything about childhood innocence and protection against the harsh realities of life, ideals that Walter wants future generations to enjoy. It is not accidental that Walter is responsible for naming it. Kingsport, Nova Scotia, where Walter attends university, is where he receives a “cruel anonymous letter” that is “more conspicuous for malice than for patriotic indignation” (*RI* 90), as well as an envelope that contains only a white feather, once again making him feel inadequate because of his feelings of cowardice. At the same time, the world outside Rainbow Valley is where Rilla hears a slur against Walter (*RI* 108), something so horrible that she cannot write it down (and consequently is lost to the reader; 87). It is here that Walter and Rilla have their grown-up talks right before he goes off to war; it is here that Rilla reads Walter’s last letter and unselfishly gives it to Una; it is here that Walter, as a child, retreats after the fist-fight with Dan Reese and opens up to John Meredith; it is here that Rilla can temporarily escape from the outside world; it is here that Walter remarks that “A white birch is a beautiful Pagan maiden who has never lost the Eden secret of being naked and unashamed” (*RI* 82).

It is also here that Walter, standing in this dear spot for the last time, sees the ghosts of his old playmates as innocent children again, along with “the old Walter that had been himself lying on the grass reading poetry or wandering through palaces of fancy.” Those “little ghosts of other days” say

to him, "We were the children of yesterday, Walter — fight a good fight for the children of today and tomorrow" (125).

Walter does fight — is awarded a medal for bravery — and then dies. Walter's death, says Epperly, "is clearly emblematic of something else in the book — of the spirit of sacrifice itself" (121). More than that, on a personal level, Walter's death is inevitable because he has seen the reality of the world: he even writes to Rilla that he would rather die than return home because the world "could never be beautiful for me again" (191). Even his body cannot return home; it is buried in an anonymous grave "somewhere in France."

Most significantly, Walter is purified of any shortcoming when he dies. The effeminate, milksoppish boy-poet has not only become a man, but "his Colonel said he was the bravest man in the regiment" (275). Even his poetry, scorned in his youth, is now celebrated: the publication of his poem "The Piper," which the narrator refers to as "the one great poem of the war" (167), dismisses contributions of such real-life war poets as Owen, Brooke, and McRae, whose "In Flanders Fields" can be seen as a prototype for Walter's poem. At the news that Germany and Austria have sued for peace, Walter's mark as a poet is validated by the family when Rilla comments on the price they've paid during the last four years for their victory:

'Not too high a price for freedom,' said Gertrude softly. 'Was it, Rilla?'

'No,' said Rilla, under her breath. She was seeing a little white cross on a battlefield of France. 'No — not if those of us who live will show ourselves worthy of it — if we "keep faith."'

'We will keep faith,' said Gertrude. She rose suddenly. A silence fell around the table, and in the silence Gertrude repeated Walter's famous poem 'The Piper.' (267)¹³

Anne of Ingleside ends with an adult Anne Blythe visiting the rooms of all her children while they sleep, a fitting ending not only to Montgomery's 21st book but, if read chronologically, the end of Montgomery's body of work published in her lifetime:

Walter was smiling in his sleep as someone who knew a charming secret. The moon was shining on his pillow through the bars of the leaded window ... casting a shadow of a clearly defined cross on the wall above his head. In long after years Anne was to remember that and wonder if it were an omen of Courcellette [...] But tonight it was only a shadow ... nothing more. (273)

Indeed, Walter Blythe was full of secrets, offering only glimpses of them to Montgomery's readers and carrying the majority of them with him to the cross-marked grave "somewhere in France."

Notes

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Throughout the text, Montgomery's own use of an ellipsis is kept standard, while the ellipses in brackets [...] are mine.

- 1 Mark Mitchell and David Leavitt identify Herman Melville's short story "I and My Chimney" as the source of "the closet" and its integrity: "The wife of 'I' supposes the chimney to contain a secret closet, and badgers her husband to open it. In the end, however, 'I' prevails: 'Besides, even if there were a secret closet, secret it should remain, and secret it shall. Yes, wife, here for once I must say my say. Infinite sad mischief has resulted from the profane bursting open of secret recesses'" (22). Parenthetically, when Anne leaves for Redmond in *Anne of the Island*, Davy Keith hides in a clothes closet, refusing to say goodbye to her. Later, when Anne and Gilbert are on the ferry to Nova Scotia, she prattles off a long speech about homesickness and then adds, as an afterthought, "I wonder if Davy has come out of the closet yet" (19).
- 2 In his thought-provoking article "L.M. Montgomery's *Rilla of Ingleside*: Intention, Inclusion, Implosion," Owen Dudley Edwards echoes Elizabeth Epperly's definition of Walter as the hero of *Rilla of Ingleside* and refers to *Rilla* as "Montgomery's *War and Peace*" (126). It should also be noted that Walter is the hero of a book that Epperly calls "Montgomery's celebration of the female" (112).
- 3 Anne and Emily are also allowed to write without much censure. Anne has complete creative freedom despite Marilla's mild disapproval and Mr. Harrison's harsh criticisms; as an adult, her work is occasionally referred to but never explored. Emily is encouraged by an enlightened teacher and eventually receives begrudging approval from Aunt Elizabeth once the cheques start coming in. Teddy Kent and Hilary Gordon, Montgomery's other male artists-in-embryo, have major obstacles — Teddy's mother is psychopathically overprotective of him and Hilary has no money and little encouragement — yet these obstacles are easily overcome in their attempts to express themselves creatively. Only with Walter is artistic expression criticized and considered problematic when linked to gender identity.
- 4 Interestingly, approximately half the works cited lists 1920 as *Rilla*'s publication date instead of 1921. What at first seems to be a simple discrepancy is in fact much more complex. Although *Rilla* was released in 1921 in all other countries, there is a first Canadian edition (McClelland and Stewart) whose copyright date is 1920 (see Russell *xvi* and 36). Because Montgomery finished writing the novel on 24 August 1920, it seems unlikely that it could have been issued that same year. However, because this mystery has not yet been fully investigated, scholars continue to use both dates.
- 5 Near the end of her life, Montgomery assembled a collection of poems, short stories and sketches that was meant to continue the *Anne* series; titled *The Blythes Are Quoted* and covering a 30-year time span between 1906 and the late 1930s, it is an interesting manuscript to examine given that Walter's death is once again at its centre. Because it has never been published as such, references to it appear in this

paper's endnotes only. Two versions of the manuscript are held at the University of Guelph archives (UG XZ1 MS A098001 and A098002); page numbers are taken from the second version of the text. A volume of the short stories was edited by Montgomery's son, E. Stuart Macdonald, and published in 1974 as *The Road to Yesterday*.

- 6 In her journal entry dated 27 January 1911, Montgomery wrote, "I have *never* drawn any of the characters in my books 'from life,' although I may have taken a quality here and an incident there." The suggestion that David and Margaret Macneill, who lived at the house that is now known as Green Gables, were the prototypes for Matthew and Marilla she found "absurd": she made Matthew shy and gave Marilla certain qualities "simply because I wished to have all the people around *Anne* as pointedly in contrast with her as possible [...] to furnish a background for *Anne*" (*SJ* II 38-39). If she is doing likewise with Jem and Walter, who is the "real" character? Who is the foil?
- 7 In *The Blythes Are Quoted*, Susan's opinion of Walter's lack of masculinity is finally made explicit instead of implicit. She continues to compare Walter to Jem, who is more "like a boy" (23), and advises Walter that "while writing poetry is a very good amusement for a woman, it is no real occupation for a man" (193). Following Walter's death, Susan admits that she regrets her criticisms of Walter and now treasures every scrap of Walter's scribbles.
- 8 Walter's inattention to Una's beauty has also been attributed to a possible secret love for Faith, his brother's fiancée. Although Walter's claim in childhood that he is fighting Dan Reese to defend Faith partially supports this interpretation, as does the mention — from Gertrude Oliver's perspective — that the adult Walter has written a "sequence of sonnets 'to Rosamund' — i.e. Faith Meredith" (*RI* 13), Epperly makes it clear that Montgomery intends to link Jem with Faith and Walter with Una: speaking of them as children, she argues that Faith is "the perfect female counterpart in spirit and (limited) vision for Jem Blythe" (100), while "Una's love for her mother makes her sound like Walter" (102). Further, Walter and Faith barely speak in *Rilla of Ingleside* and Faith is noticeably absent from most of the novel, making this possibility unlikely.
- 9 In *The Blythes Are Quoted*, the family reads Walter's poem "Interlude" and then speculates whether Walter ever kissed a girl. Faith Meredith claims that Walter once kissed Una but Rilla argues that the poem was written before this happened. It is at this moment that Susan regrets her criticism of Walter's poetry — at the revelation of an apparent act of proper masculinity that she believed Walter was lacking.
- 10 William Y.'s concern for Aunt Becky's salvation is only momentary. He immediately reminds himself that "she was a Penhallow. A Penhallow couldn't go anywhere but to the right place" (*ATW* 95). In *The Golden Road*, Cecily asks Beverley if he believes Mr. Campbell will go to heaven when he dies. "Of course he will," Beverley replies; "Isn't he a member of the church?" (155). In *Anne of Avonlea*, Jane Andrews is described as "a good girl, a member of the church, who tried conscientiously to live up to her profession [of schoolteacher] and believed everything she had been taught. But she never thought about heaven any more than she could help it" (105).
- 11 In *The Blythes Are Quoted*, Susan defends Walter's assumed Christian faith commitment after his death when Rilla avers that he really did believe in fairies. "But not in the olden gods at any time, Rilla. You can never convince me that Walter was a pagan. He went to church and Sunday-school every Sunday and liked it" (343), which suggests that perhaps Susan is now or has at some time been concerned about Walter's salvation. Following the reading of one of his poems, she turns right around and says with anger, "I do not often question the purposes of the Almighty. But I

should like to know why He makes a brain that can write things like that and then lets it be crushed to death" (345).

- 12 Montgomery presents a more explicit example of an unmasculine boy in "The Cheated Child," a short story from *The Blythes Are Quoted* that was published in *The Road to Yesterday* (page numbers from *RtY*). In it, Patrick Brewster yearns to find a home with people who love him following the death of his guardian, Uncle Stephen, who had "liked boys to be robust and aggressive — real 'he boys'" — everything that Patrick is not. His relatives, however, are more interested in his inheritance, and Patrick is unhappy at every turn. His male cousins are polite to him "because you have to be polite to girls" (203) and tell everyone at school that he is a sissy (200). Most significant in this story is the peculiar bond that exists between Patrick, ages nine to ten, and Walter Blythe, whose age is not made clear but who is at least twelve (age discrepancies throughout this text are abundant). Although Walter is never seen, he appears frequently in Patrick's imagination and is referred to almost incessantly, either by adults who call him "half-witted" (195) and "a sissy, and not over-brave in the bargain" (207) (an accusation that Patrick does not directly deny), or by Patrick himself, who has felt "a strange kinship [with Walter] the few times they had met. Walter was like himself: quiet and dreamy and sensitive" (186). The separation of Patrick from "other boys" is made explicit by a bus driver with a "certain soft spot in his heart for boys" (209) who "did not feel altogether easy about [Patrick]. There was something ... well, a little odd about him ... some difference the good man could not have explained, between him and other boys" (210). Throughout the story, there are three references to Patrick and Walter's "other world" and the things they do there, including Patrick's hope that they will someday find "A door that might — should — open into that other world" (209). Although the suggestion of a possible sexual component to their friendship is inappropriate given their ages, Patrick concludes at the end of the story that "he loved Walter with all his heart" (223).
- 13 Years after making "The Piper" a major element of *Rilla of Ingleside*, Montgomery finally succumbed to pressure from her fans to write it. Although the poem is much below her usual standards and has little literary value, it is nevertheless an important poem in light of the fanfare it caused within her fictional account of World War I. Moreover, just as Walter's "The Piper" was published after his death, Montgomery's "The Piper" appeared after hers: submitted to *Saturday Night* magazine three weeks before her death, it appeared posthumously on 2 May 1942. It is her final poem.

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