

## *Anne Shirley Crosses Borders*

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### **Abstract**

Throughout the eight books that constitute the core of Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables* series, the protagonist, Anne Shirley, later Anne Blythe, crosses many borders. Some of these are geographical as she changes towns in order to study or work. As time goes by, Anne's life reaches broader circles: at first she is only "of Green Gables", later "of Avonlea" and, in the third volume, "of the Island". The heroine also passes from an idyllic childhood to a painful motherhood, from romantic dreams of a perfect prince to the realisation that "perfect" is not what she wants and that the man who does not match her dreams is the one who is truly ideal for her. An abundance of social conventions are waiting for Anne to test their limits, which she does, allowing herself at times to abandon the seriousness of Mrs Dr Blythe. All these crossings are discussed in the present paper in order to propose a reading which considers border crossings as pivotal points in the series.

### Anne Shirley Crosses Borders

Anne Shirley is the protagonist of Lucy Maud Montgomery's famous series referred to by the title of the first book, *Anne of Green Gables*. The series includes the following eight volumes (with the date of the first publication and Anne's approximate age given in parentheses): *Anne of Green Gables* (1908, 11 to 16), *Anne of Avonlea* (1909, 16 to 18), *Anne of the Island* (1915, 18 to 22), *Anne of Windy Poplars* (1936, 22 to 25), *Anne's House of Dreams* (1917, 25 to 27), *Anne of Ingleside* (1939, 34 to 40), *Rainbow Valley* (1919, 41), and *Rilla of Ingleside* (1921, 49 to 53). The last two volumes are not centred around Anne as much as the first six are – rather, they tell the stories of her children, friends and neighbours, yet she is also present in them.<sup>1</sup> The books were not written and published in the order in which they should be read. Thus, "Montgomery had to carefully construct a past for Anne that fit comfortably and believably into the existing framework" (Poe 19).

Poe further observes that novels about Anne Shirley are often perceived as children's stories, especially by readers who are only familiar with the first volume. Indeed, the first book is a story about a child and a story for children – but even it is already not only for children. Mitchell and Ledwell claim that "readers of different ages and eras and diverse cultures have read beyond literary conventions and the conventionalities of literary genre, style and culture" (3). As a series, these books offer much more than the account of Anne's iconic and hilarious moments – such as the day she dyed her hair green, trying to make it black, which is described in the first volume. The later parts are definitely addressed to a more mature audience – so much so that they rather exclude children from their readership. In contrast, the first, or even the first two books, could be read, enjoyed and understood by people of all ages. The later books describe experiences such as the death of Anne's firstborn daughter, then the difficult years of the First World War in which she loses another child, her son Walter. Lucy Maud Montgomery's famous series has been popular not only with readers but also with scholars. Carole

<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, there are three books which follow the series. The first two are collections of short stories about various people and events, in which Anne is mentioned and sometimes plays a minor role: *Chronicles of Avonlea* (1912) and *Further Chronicles of Avonlea* (1920). The last volume related to Anne is *The Blythes Are Quoted* (2009, in which Anne is 40 to 75 years old). These three books are additions to the main series in the sense that they add some sub-lines to the plot, but one does not have to read them to know Anne's story. Thus, this article will focus on the eight volumes which constitute the core of the series.

Gerson remarks that “[i]n the academic canon, Montgomery’s value can be measured by the frequency of her appearance as the subject of scholarly publications and graduate theses” (18).

In between the first volume, where the reader meets Anne as an 11-year-old orphan, and the eighth one, when, in her fifties, she serves as an example of female courage during the Great War, Anne crosses many borders. Some of these are geographical, others metaphorical. In the introduction to a paper in which she analyses *Anne of Green Gables* and its adaptation into a TV series, Signore classifies the first novel as Bildungsroman, as it “tells a story of an adolescent and her gradual maturation into a young woman” (par 1). Poe notes the series’ exceptionality, pointing out that boys are usually the protagonists of Bildungsroman narratives (22). Signore’s categorisation can be easily extended and applied to the entire series, as the following volumes show Anne’s development and maturation as well. *Anne of Green Gables* portrays the initial stages of the heroine’s development. Many crucial moments, moments of crossing a border between stages of life, are shown in later volumes of the series. This paper describes and analyses some of the moments in Anne’s life that can be seen as her crossing borders in the process of becoming a mature woman.

The books’ titles mark stages in the protagonist’s life, both in terms of space and experience. They are the first indicators of the progress of Anne’s life. In the first volume, *Anne of Green Gables*, her life is mostly centred around the house. It does not go significantly beyond the Green Gables farm where she lives with Marilla and Matthew Cuthbert, the elderly siblings who adopted her. Naturally, she goes to school, to church, and to visit friends and neighbours, but she is not much engaged in village life. Having finished her education in the Avonlea school, Anne leaves the village to go to Queen’s Academy and obtain a teaching license. She succeeds, completing her studies in one year instead of the regular two years and earning a scholarship which would allow her to pursue further education and earn a B.A. degree at Redmond College. However, when Matthew suddenly dies as is Marilla gradually losing her sight, Anne decides to return home and stay in Avonlea as a teacher, optimistically waiting for what life may bring her. Thus, even though for a period of time the protagonist is away from the Green Gables farm, attending school in Charlottetown, it is a brief occurrence and she eventually goes back to being Anne of Green Gables.

The second volume, *Anne of Avonlea*, narrates the few years that the heroine spends teaching in the Avonlea school. According to Epperly, while the first volume “dealt more with “being and seeing”” the second one is “a book “about doing and reacting”” (qtd. in Poe 23). There is no major gap in the

plot between *Anne of Green Gables* and the following novel. The reader can observe Anne as she begins her teaching career in the school in which she was a student, thus crossing to the other side of the teacher's desk. The debut is not an easy one – she is in her own village, where the pupils and their parents know her, she knows them, and both sides are sometimes prejudiced. It is also in this volume that Marilla adopts twins, Davy and Dora. Initially, the children are to stay at Green Gables only temporarily, waiting for other relatives to take care of them after their mother died, yet in the end they remain there. Anne is largely responsible for Davy and Dora's upbringing. The siblings are very different, Davy being energetic, naughty – though rather honest and good-natured – and Dora presenting an example of a little girl so nice, well-behaved and perfect that she is sometimes dull. Anne must guide the two children, give them good examples, and react to their misbehaviour in an appropriate way even though sometimes it is difficult for her to scold Davy as she would like to laugh at his ideas instead.

The heroine also becomes more engaged in social life, starting the AVIS (Avonlea Village Improvement Society). As a founder, she takes the initiative, plans and introduces various ideas for improvement – not all of which are successful – and she becomes a very active member of Avonlea's community. Another manifestation of Anne's broadened scope of life is the fact that she develops relationships and friendships with adult people in the village, as opposed to only sharing Marilla's friendships. Before, Anne's friends were either her age – for example Diana Barry, Jane Andrews, Ruby Gillis and Gilbert Blythe – or, like Mrs Rachel Lynde, they were family friends rather than Anne's personal companions. In the second volume, Anne starts two prominent acquaintances on her own. The first one is with a new neighbour, Mr Harrison. He appears to be a disagreeable man, yet with time Anne discovers that, in fact, he is a good companion and a helpful friend. The heroine's second new acquaintance is Miss Lavendar Lewis. Anne and her best friend Diana find Miss Lavendar's house, Echo Lodge, when they accidentally follow the wrong road in a forest. It proves to be a very fortunate and fruitful mistake. Anne and Miss Lavendar share a romantic, imaginative view on life, they enjoy each other's company greatly and the protagonist becomes a frequent visitor at Echo Lodge.

Aside from being a teacher and a guardian of Davy and Dora, in *Anne of Avonlea* the heroine starts having a major, direct influence on other people's lives. She is very compassionate and willing to provide help whenever it is possible by planning and organising such complex and meaningful events as the reunion of two lovers. Anne's favourite student at the Avonlea school is Paul Irving, whose father, Stephen Irving, was Miss Lavendar's beloved

fiancé in her youth. The couple parted in a moment of misguided anger, after which Mr Irving left Canada to go and live in the United States where he married another woman with whom he had a son, Paul. Mrs Irving died and Paul came to Avonlea to live with his grandmother. When Anne learns the story, she introduces Paul to Miss Lavendar and eventually arranges a meeting between the two old lovers. Thanks to Anne, their misunderstanding is explained and they marry, finding again the happiness and love that they had shared a few decades before.

In the third book, *Anne of the Island*, Miss Shirley goes to university. Its Polish title was literally translated as “Anne at the University”. In fact, Montgomery planned to name the book “Anne of Redmond”, but her publisher forced her to change the title, even though she opposed the idea (Lefebvre 129). The choice of “Anne of the Island” seems to be more consistent with the previous two titles, indicating that Anne’s life becomes broader and broader in its purview. First, her existence is centred around the house, then she becomes an independent member of Avonlea’s community as a teacher, an AVIS member and a person who influences other people’s lives, now as the title suggests, her horizons broaden. Readers could assume that the heroine’s life and influence will now in some way be extended to the whole Prince Edward Island; for example, Anne could move to a different town. However, to go to university the heroine in fact must leave Prince Edward Island and travels to Nova Scotia. Thus, her life encompasses an even broader circle, greater than the title’s “Island”. There is a possible explanation for this. The protagonist leaves Prince Edward Island (PEI), but the spirit of her beloved PEI is present in the book – Anne misses the place and compares it to her new surroundings. Even though she is not on the island, its presence in the original title can be read as an indication that it is Anne’s source of values, the place where she was brought up and with which she identifies herself. She was born in Nova Scotia, but since she spent so much time in Avonlea and Charlottetown, she has become a PEI girl – the crucial years of her education and of transitioning from childhood to adulthood were all spent in Avonlea and its surroundings, with the islanders and their values, which Anne adopted and now holds as her own, claiming them openly when her friends point out that she was born in Nova Scotia. “[N]o matter where Anne goes, the connection to her home remains strong and enriching.” (Poe 23) However, Anne has learned all she could from her dear PEI and now she has to go beyond in order to gain a higher education.

The time she spends in Kingsport at Redmond College gives her more than a B.A. degree. It is also the time when she gets to know herself better. Gilbert Blythe asks her to marry him, but Anne believes that she only

feels friendship for him and refuses. Soon, it seems that her romantic dream comes true: a man who looks and behaves like the prince of her fantasies falls in love with her. For two years, Anne herself and everybody who knows her are convinced that she will become Mrs Royal Gardner. Yet when Roy proposes, Anne realises that he is not the perfect man for her. He is as ideal as the magical prince of her dreams, but she suddenly sees that this is not what she wants and needs. Surprised by her own feelings and surprising Roy and all their friends, she does not accept his proposal. Her final year of studies ends and Anne goes back to Avonlea and Green Gables, not knowing that life is preparing another revelation. When she rejected Roy, she did not yet understand that she loved Gilbert: it takes his serious, potentially fatal illness for Anne to feel worried and then to understand what he means to her (Poe 26). Towards the end of the third volume, Anne and Gilbert become engaged. They are to spend the following years separately, Anne as the principal teacher at the Summerside High School and Gilbert at a university, pursuing his medical studies.

Thus, in the fourth book, *Anne of the Windy Poplars*, Anne lives in the town of Summerside, teaching, waiting for her fiancé to finish medical school and exchanging letters with him, sharing her thoughts and experiences. This is the very first time in her life Anne works in a foreign place and – at least initially – has no friends: she is “unaccepted for the first time.” (Poe 27) At the university, she had some of her old school companions whom she had known for many years. At Summerside, she arrives as a stranger and an outsider, who must fight to be accepted in a prejudiced environment: the Pringles, an influential family in the town, do not support her as the principal of the High School, at least not at the beginning of her career. Later, she wins their acceptance. She also finds excellent companions in the two women from whom she rents a room and in their housekeeper. Once again, Anne consciously and deliberately influences other people’s lives in a positive way. She makes an effort to befriend a fellow Summerside High School teacher, Katherine Brooke, who is bitter and jealous of Anne until she learns that Anne’s childhood was difficult in a way much similar to her own – both women were orphaned. Anne’s warmth and good nature eventually prevail and Katherine learns how to leave resentment behind and be happy.

Book five, *Anne’s House of Dreams*, shows the protagonist leaving Green Gables as a bride. From now on, she will only visit the farm as a guest and she will have to establish her own house. Gilbert finds a place which, for his wife, is her House of Dreams, so this is what they name it. As everywhere, Anne finds many close friends there and is generally loved and respected. It is in her House of Dreams that she crosses one of her most significant borders: she

becomes a mother. Her first child dies but the second one lives. This experience will be discussed later in the paper. It is in this volume that Anne meets Leslie Moore who soon becomes her close friend.

In the sixth volume, *Anne of Ingleside*, the protagonist moves to Ingleside, a much more spacious house, because the family has grown. Anne's first son, Jem, was born in the House of Dreams, and the other five children – at Ingleside. The little Blythes are important characters in the book and numerous plot lines are devoted to them. Yet Anne is still present as a character and some chapters are centred around her. For instance, there is a time when she has doubts regarding her marriage. Gilbert seems to have lost his fascination with his wife and Anne watches him have a seemingly engrossed conversation with Christine Stuart, a woman who was his close acquaintance at university, at a time when Anne did not openly care for Gilbert. Anne had thought he and Christine would marry. Later she learned that the nature of their relationship was a friendship with no romantic feelings. Now, however, Christine is back and Gilbert seems to be interested in her. Anne needs this impulse of watching the two of them spend time together to solve the problem that she has had with her marriage lately. If she was worried that Gilbert no longer loved her, she now discovers that his lack of attention for her is caused by the fact that he is deeply concerned about one of his patients. Secondly, she honestly admits to herself that, by not noticing this on time and not helping Gilbert go through those difficult moments, it is she who neglected her spouse. Self-observation and an honest conversation with her husband allow Anne to forget about her fears and doubts after which she regains her happiness in her marriage. The presence of Anne's moments of doubt and anxiety serve a purpose: "Montgomery shows that marriage, even a happy one, is not always rosy romance" (Poe 29).

The seventh book, *Rainbow Valley*, is focused on Anne's children rather than on her. For the first time, the title does not include her name and does not place her within a spatial context. Instead, it refers to a place near the house where the Blythe children spend a lot of time with their friends playing, dreaming and reading. Anne, at the same time, continues to be "Anne of Ingleside": she is Gilbert's wife, the mistress of Ingleside, the mother of six beloved children, a member of the local society, a friend to many neighbours. She remains in these roles and in the same place. This will not change significantly until the end of the series. New experiences will come, but they will not change who she is, there will be no great revolutions such as the ones that the readers could see in the titles and events of previous volumes. There will only be additions.



Book eight, *Rilla of Ingleside*, clearly makes Anne's youngest daughter the protagonist. Not only is Anne not mentioned in the title, but Rilla even takes her place in the pattern of "person-of-place". Again, Anne is still present as a character, but Rilla's point of view dominates. The readers experience the First World War in Canada through Rilla's eyes. Wilfrid Eggleston, writing under the pseudonym of Altair, notes that *Rilla of Ingleside* "give[s] [readers] the dim reflection of the battle front in the hearts of those who did not go" (Lefebvre 218). Her brothers, as well as many other village boys, go and fight in Europe. Walter, Anne's middle son, dies. The significance of this experience will be discussed in a later section of the article.

Within the process of moving from one place, social circle and environment to another, Anne also changes houses, each of which is very important to her. Montgomery herself often stated "that a woman's place [is] at home" (Lefebvre 50). With her imaginative, romantic character, she sees houses as companions, each with its own character. For Anne, buildings give shelter, happiness, warmth, safety, and they are also symbols of all these. For instance, she makes Ingleside the home of a happy, loving family, and when she is there, she feels that the house reflects back happiness and love.

In the first book of the series, Anne does not have many positive memories of the orphanage and the foster homes in which she lives before Marilla and Matthew adopt her. She remembers few friendly people and a lot of hard, often unpleasant work. Margaret Steffler states that Anne experiences "unhoming and dislocation" (161). The Green Gables farm in Avonlea is the first place that she can call home. There is a room for her, which, with time, she arranges and adorns with the decorations that she likes. Marilla makes Anne do work around the house, yet this is not an unpleasant burden as Anne is working in her own home, helping her new family, which is very different from performing ordered tasks in a place where, even though she was officially an adopted child, she played the role of unpaid domestic help. Green Gables provides her with safety and comfort, and, most importantly, the house itself and the family become her first real home.

The next homes, Anne must find and arrange for herself. Each of the buildings, the time when Anne lives in them and the transitions between them are significant. When the heroine leaves Green Gables in the third volume to study at university, she first lives in a boarding house, which she then happily exchanges for Patty's Place. Patty's Place is a small house found during one of Anne's walks. She loves it instantly and, as if by magical coincidence, it is available for rent, since the owners are leaving Canada to travel. The price must be negotiated since Anne and her three friends are not able to pay the sum originally proposed by the owner, Miss Patty Spofford. When



Anne appears at Patty's Place, Miss Spofford has already rejected a few potential tenants as she did not find them trustworthy and suitable to live in her dear house. In Anne, however, she recognises a person who will take the best possible care of the house and will truly love it. Thus, she agrees to receive a lower rent and Anne is able to move in together with Priscilla, Philippa and Stella. As opposed to the boarding house, Patty's Place gives Anne and a few of her closest friends an opportunity to create a real home. With her three friends and Jamesina, Stella's aunt who cooks and maintains the household for the girls, Anne can enjoy the atmosphere of a real home for the remaining years of her studies.

At Windy Poplars in Summerside, she has a room with a charming view, to which she often refers in her letters to Gilbert. It gives her privacy and the feeling of safety in a city where she initially has no friends but rather some enemies in the Pringle clan. After her time the headmistress of Summerside High School, Anne returns to Green Gables to leave it as a bride. Gilbert finds a house for them near the village of Glen St. Mary – a place which is so far away from Avonlea that frequent visits are not possible. The reason for the location is that Gilbert's uncle is retiring and Gilbert is to take over his medical practice in the area. Young Mrs Blythe faces the task of establishing a home for herself and her husband, and she manages it splendidly. The House of Dreams is the first place of which she is the mistress. It is a cosy spot which witnesses the first happy years of Anne and Gilbert's marriage. Predictably, the House of Dreams quickly becomes a meeting place for Anne's new circle of friends. The nights they spend sitting in front of the fire talking become a symbol of her social success. One may argue that success in being mistress of a house is measured by factors other than the happiness of the house's occupants and their popularity with their neighbours. In this case, Marilla, who taught Anne almost everything she knows about cooking and housekeeping, would be a good judge. When she visits Anne together with Mrs Rachel Lynde, they both observe Anne and check her kitchen inconspicuously to declare unanimously that young Mrs Blythe manages her home perfectly.

Finally, Ingleside is a symbol of Anne's big, happy family. Anne and Gilbert move to Ingleside after the birth of their first son, Jem. From that moment, their family begins growing, and the function and atmosphere of their new house is different from that of House of Dreams. The small house was a cosy haven for the young married couple. Ingleside is much bigger out of necessity: Anne and Gilbert have six children. Susan Baker, who started working for the Blythes when Anne was pregnant with Joyce and still lived in the House of Dreams, is the housemaid at Ingleside and helps Anne with the house and garden chores. The houses and their characters change because

Anne's life and roles change. In the House of Dreams, she was a young bride and the mother of one child (since her first child, Joyce, died very soon after birth). Later, when she becomes the mother of six children, her life changes, and so does the house, not only in terms of the building itself, but also in terms of its character and atmosphere. Life at Ingleside, just like Anne's life, is centred around a big family. Poe notes that "[g]iven the war-torn times in which [*Anne of Ingleside*] and the three that followed (both in publishing and Anne-chronology) were written these themes show that during times of strife, the constancy of home is worth fighting for" (29).

The home of Anne's birth parents is important to her and Anne's visit there in the third volume is significant for both her and the readers. At first, the house in Bolingbroke, Nova Scotia, exists only in the heroine's memories, but when she is studies at Redmond College she has an opportunity to visit it. One of the friends she shares Patty's Place with, Philippa Gordon, was born in the same area and her family still lives there. When the girls are talking, they discover that Philippa's house is close to Anne's parents' former house. When Philippa goes to visit her family, she takes Anne along. Philippa provides Anne with a very pleasant and entertaining time in Bolingbroke. However, the moment she visits the place where she lived with her parents as a very young child is the most important event in the book. Anne walks into the house and into the very room in which she was born. She is finally able to see the house she has been imagining for years. The most outstanding event, though, is the fact that the woman who currently lives there has kept a packet of Anne's parents' letters. All the other things, from furniture to clothes, were sold or given away after Mr and Mrs Shirley's unexpected, early deaths, so Anne does not have anything of theirs. During the visit, she receives the letters, which provide her with a "connection" to her parents. She says: "This has been the most beautiful day of my life. I've FOUND my father and mother. Those letters have made them REAL to me. I'm not an orphan any longer" (*Anne of the Island*, ch. 21). Potentially, this event could have been very sad for Anne. However, instead of dwelling on the past and the lost possibility of a happy and peaceful childhood spent with her parents, Anne enjoys and celebrates the few moments she can spend in the house where she was born and taste this happiness, even though she does not remember much of it. She focuses on the pleasure and the feeling of having a certain gap filled – the house is no longer an unknown place, she no longer has to imagine it, now she can recall it. It is a real place for her and she can refer to it. This visit allows her to reconnect with her origins. Sadness does not dominate this chapter, due to the fact that Anne has created a happy alternative for herself. Patty's Place waiting for her return – she has a real home and a happy life. Moreover, back

on Prince Edward Island in Avonlea, there is the Green Gables farm with Marilla and the twins: another safe, happy place which she can call home and in which she leads a happy life. The mistake that was made in her adoption process – Matthew and Marilla had wanted a boy to help them on the farm, not a girl – gave Anne a chance at a good life. The Cuthberts provided her with a warm, safe home and now she has arranged such a home for herself by finding Patty's Place. Without these two homes and a happy life, her impressions from visiting the small Bolingbroke home could have been sad and marked by feelings of loss and regret. Since she does have a good life, seeing the place where she lived with her parents gives her fulfilment and fills her with gratitude. Enriched and strengthened by this experience and holding the packet of her parents' letters, Anne gladly departs from Bolingbroke.

There are more moments within the story when Anne leaves her everyday life and comes back to it with conscious pleasure. In *Rainbow Valley*, Anne and Gilbert travel to Europe, fulfilling the plan which he mentioned earlier. Taking the opportunity to go to a medical symposium that he wants to attend, they travel together to see Europe. The very first chapter shows them coming home, so the readers do not have a chance to follow them on their journey. It is only mentioned as an event that took place. The fact that the characters are not shown directly during their travelling and sightseeing makes the event seem unimportant. For Anne, coming home is clearly more exhilarating than sightseeing in Europe. She openly declares:

I'm starving for Glen St. Mary gossip, Susan. I hope Miss Cornelia can tell me everything that has happened while we've been away—EVERYTHING—who has got born, or married, or drunk; who has died, or gone away, or come, or fought, or lost a cow, or found a beau. It's so delightful to be home again with all the dear Glen folks, and I want to know all about them. Why, I remember wondering, as I walked through Westminster Abbey which of her two especial [sic] beaux Millicent Drew would finally marry (*Rainbow Valley* ch. 1).

Even when Anne was visiting London, she still thought about life at Ingleside. She visited Europe, saw it, enjoyed it, and she is very happy to return to Prince Edward Island, just as she came back there from Nova Scotia where she was studying and where she visited her family home. Anne can appreciate and greatly enjoy other places, yet wherever she is, she thinks about her home often.

When Anne and Gilbert live in their House of Dreams, she gives birth to their first child, a daughter, Joyce. The experience of motherhood is a new, wonderful land for Anne and she crosses this border excitedly, with extreme happiness.

Anne, her pale face blanched with its baptism of pain, her eyes aglow with the holy passion of motherhood, did not need to be told to think of her baby. She thought of nothing else. For a few hours she tasted of happiness so rare and exquisite that she wondered if the angels in heaven did not envy her.

“Little Joyce”, she murmured, when Marilla came in to see the baby. “We planned to call her that if she were a girlie. There were so many we would have liked to name her for; we couldn’t choose between them, so we decided on Joyce—we can call her Joy for short—Joy—it suits so well. Oh, Marilla, I thought I was happy before. Now I know that I just dreamed a pleasant dream of happiness. THIS is the reality” (*Anne’s House of Dreams* ch. 19).

Sadly, little Joyce dies very soon and it is exceptionally difficult for Anne to accept. Eventually, she recovers both mentally and physically, and is able to return to everyday life, but there is a certain sadness in her which, from that moment on, never leaves her, and leaves a visible reminder on her face. The narrator observes that “there was something in the smile that had never been in Anne’s smile before and would never be absent from it again” (*Anne’s House of Dreams* ch. 20).

The protagonist is deeply changed by this tragic experience. She can perceive the change herself, noticing that, while in the past she enjoyed the time she could spend without any company, now she is afraid to be alone as she feels extremely lonely then. In a conversation with a friend, Captain Jim, Anne expresses doubt regarding her ability to dream: ““Oh—dreams,” sighed Anne. “I can’t dream now, Captain Jim—I’m done with dreams”” (*Anne’s House of Dreams* ch. 20). People around her also notice a difference in Anne. The change in her is very significant in the context of Anne’s relationship with her neighbour and close friend, Leslie Moore. Leslie clearly sees Anne’s tragedy as a border that was crossed.

Leslie has had a complicated and tragic life. Before she appears in the story, she has lost her beloved younger brother in an accident, her father has committed suicide, and her mother has died at a young age. Before she passes, the mother forces Leslie to marry Dick Moore in order to save the house and farm from foreclosure. The Moores own the property’s mortgage and interest had not been paid for some years; marriage between Leslie and Dick was the only solution. Leslie loves her mother so much that she sacrificed her own happiness and married a man ‘with a little ugly soul’ (*Anne’s House of Dreams* ch. 11). He goes on a sea journey and the ship never returns. Mrs Moore’s life seems to be easier without her husband, yet she is not free to marry again, not knowing if her husband is really dead. Some time later, Captain Jim finds Dick Moore in Cuba and bring him home. The man is changed, apparently by an accident. He behaves like a child, needing constant care and attention. Leslie is forced to become a nurse, caring for a man she did not love.

After the Blythes come to town, Gilbert arranges medical consultations and the resulting surgery brings the man's memory back and revealed that he is not Leslie's husband, but his very similar cousin, George Moore. The two men were always so alike – they even had the same exceptional eyes, one blue and one brown – that Leslie was convinced it was Dick. Not knowing about the similarity, she could not suspect her mistake. When George recovers after the surgery he says that Leslie's real husband died in Cuba of yellow fever. Thus, Leslie suddenly becomes free: she is no longer the wife and nurse of a man whom she does not love and who would not be able to live without her.

At the time of Joyce's death, Leslie does not yet know that her husband is dead. She is still tied to a man that she must take care of and it seems that her life will never change for better. Many tragic events in her life have made her bitter and unhappy. The detailed description of her experiences is given her to show the contrast between Leslie and Anne. Just like Katherine Brooke, Leslie sees Anne's life as perfectly happy and idyllic. True, her childhood was difficult, but after her adoption it seems that Anne has known only happiness – apart from the time when Matthew dies. She has the ideal husband and all the chances of leading a wonderful life, while Leslie sees only bitterness and disappointment ahead. This great difference of experience has formed a border between them. Leslie feels that Anne, as a person who has known so much great happiness, cannot really understand her. Joyce's death made Anne feel the pain which Leslie felt as she watched her little brother get killed in an accident on their farm. Now that Anne knows the deepest pain of losing a most beloved person, Leslie feels that the border between them is gone and says so in a conversation, thus bringing it to the attention of both Anne and the readers. Joyce's death and its significance for Anne were also a border that was crossed.

Joyce is not Anne's only child to die. Walter, her middle son, was lost in WWI. All three of her sons joined the Canadian army and fought in the Great War. The oldest, Jem, at its onset, and the youngest, Shirley, as soon as he was old enough. Both went willingly as did many of Glen St. Mary's boys. Walter, however, was afraid to go and his cowardice agonised him. Eventually, he went to Europe, as he predicted many years earlier in Rainbow Valley, in a moment of vision:

“I love the Pied Piper story”, said Di, “and so does mother. I always feel so sorry for the poor little lame boy who couldn't keep up with the others and got shut out of the mountain. He must have been so disappointed. I think all the rest of his life he'd be wondering what wonderful thing he had missed and wishing he could have got in with the others”.

“But how glad his mother must have been”, said Una softly. “I think she had been sorry all her life that he was lame. Perhaps she even used to cry about it. But she would never be sorry again—never. She would be glad he was lame because that was why she hadn’t lost him”.

“Some day”, said Walter dreamily, looking afar into the sky, “the Pied Piper will come over the hill up there and down Rainbow Valley, piping merrily and sweetly. And I will follow him – follow him down to the shore – down to the sea – away from you all. I don’t think I’ll want to go – Jem will want to go – it will be such an adventure – but I won’t. Only I’ll HAVE to – the music will call and call and call me until I MUST follow” (*Rainbow Valley* ch. 8).

Just like Walter, Anne had a kind of vision, a premonition, earlier, in *Anne of Ingleside*, one night when she was looking lovingly at her sleeping children:

‘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 the shadow of a clearly defined cross on the wall above his head. In long after years Annie [sic] was to remember that and wonder if it were an omen of Courcelette... of a cross-marked grave “somewhere in France”. But tonight it was only a shadow... nothing more’ (*Anne of Ingleside*, ch. 41).

Walter eventually follows the Piper. Of all his siblings and closest friends, he alone, the sensitive, visionary poet, is the one who is killed. Since World War I is described in the series’ last volume, it is mostly seen from Rilla’s perspective. When the news of Walter’s death comes to Ingleside, the narrator reports that ‘Rilla’s younger life recovered physically sooner than her mother. For weeks Mrs Blythe lay ill from grief and shock’ (*Rilla of Ingleside*, ch. 23). Nothing more is said, because Rilla cannot know what is happening in her mother’s heart and mind, but this image is powerful enough. From then on Anne is a mother who has lost not one but two of her beloved children. Despite her patriotism and bravery, after such an experience it becomes difficult for her to let her youngest son, Shirley, join the war. He wants to go as soon as his age permits. Anne’s strain is visible when she struggles with deciding whether to let her son go:

Shirley said nothing more. He was not a lad of many words. Anne did not say anything more just then, either. She was thinking of little Joyce’s grave in the old burying-ground over-harbour – little Joyce who would have been a woman now, had she lived – of the white cross in France and the splendid grey eyes of the little boy who had been taught his first lessons of duty and loyalty at her knee – of Jem in the terrible trenches – of Nan and Di and Rilla, waiting – waiting – waiting, while the golden years of youth passed by – and she wondered if she could bear any more. She thought not; surely she had given enough.

Yet that night she told Shirley that he might go’ (*Rilla of Ingleside*, ch. 25).



The series' eight books present many social conventions, which are usually often associated with age. Anne complies with customs such as the one stating that girls can only start wearing their hair up at a certain age. In *Rainbow Valley*, she talks about her idea of organising a meeting in the village and giving a speech to defend her friend, Mr Meredith, a minister who is criticised by many. Hiding amusement under a very serious expression, she says: 'I shan't do it, of course... it would be too unconventional, and we must be conventional or die, after we reach what is supposed to be a dignified age' (*Rainbow Valley*, ch. 26). Her true attitude, the complete opposite of these words, is shown when, some years earlier (the event is described in *Anne's House of Dreams*) she goes for a walk, finds a secluded sea cove and says: 'I'm going to dance and sing... There's no one here to see me – the seagulls won't carry tales of the matter. I may be as crazy as I like' (*Anne's House of Dreams*, ch. 10). So she dances and laughs, only to discover, after a few moments, that someone is watching her. It is Leslie Moore – the episode is the beginning of their friendship – but before they start talking, Anne feels ashamed, thinking of the fact that as 'Mrs Dr Blythe, with all the dignity of the matron to keep up' (*Anne's House of Dreams*, ch. 10), she should be serious, at least on the outside. She knows she can have her moments of unrestricted joy, she does not regret having this one, but she feels she should not have been seen. This exemplifies her views on conventions. They can be ignored, as long as it causes no harm. (The possible harm in her dancing and laughing is that people could choose not to call her husband if they needed medical help. They could judge Gilbert unfavourably because of her behaviour and choose a doctor with a less frivolous wife.) In general, conventions for Anne are limits that can be crossed when there is no danger in doing so. She finds excitement and pleasure in both the act of crossing these borders and the outcome of such crossings.

Yet another type of borders crossed by the protagonist of Lucy Maud Montgomery's famous series are the borders of self-awareness and self-knowledge. For instance, Anne starts her acquaintance with Gilbert Blythe by quarrelling with him in the first volume – he offends her pride terribly by referring to her red hair and its colour as 'carrots' – she breaks her school slate on his head and, from then on, overtly hates him, even though he makes attempts at reconciliation. With time, Anne's feelings change, yet she still is too proud to admit she likes Gilbert. Finally, she overcomes her pride and they establish a good friendship, study together and motivate each other, maintaining contact even when they study or work in different places. Gilbert proposes to Anne in the third volume, when they are both in Kingsport at Redmond University, but she refuses, since she has an idealised image of both love and



a lover. As mentioned earlier, she then meets Roy Gardner, who is the embodiment of her dreams and they become a couple. Yet when he proposes, Anne realises that, although he really is the ideal man of her dreams, love is not so ideal because this perfect, handsome man does not really 'belon[g] in [her] life' (*Anne of the Island*, ch. 38). The chapter's title describes the event as 'False Dawn'. Thus, the reader knows beforehand that Anne will not accept the proposal: she will understand it at the very last moment. It is the first part of her journey to self-discovery. '[S]he realises that dreams might be fine in their place, but if they don't fit into reality, they are useless.' (Poe 26) The second stage of Anne's passage to self-awareness comes in a chapter called 'A Book of Revelation'. The title foreshadows the moment in which Anne will finally find the truth in her own heart. When Gilbert falls ill and it is known that he may die, she realises that she loves him, that he is her perfect man. When he recovers, they finally become engaged. For some time, Anne is certain that she loved Roy, yet she is disappointed because 'some indefinable zest was missing out of life' (*Anne of the Island*, ch. 38). She thinks she understands love, and it is a disappointing thing after all. Then comes the second, the real 'revelation,' which shows her that love is as exciting and beautiful as she once thought and that it can be found in an unforeseen place.

Too often seen as children's literature, the series of books about Anne Shirley, later Anne Blythe, offers much more than simple amusement. The heroine matures, and during this process, crosses many borders. Each of these crossings shows Anne's determination, strength, self-awareness, and each provides her with more of these characteristics. From the day she arrives at Green Gables to the difficult moments of World War I, Anne crosses geographical and metaphorical borders, and these crossings define her.

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