

“THAT HOUSE BELONGS TO ME”:
THE APPROPRIATION OF SPACE, PLACE, AND HERITAGE
IN L.M. MONTGOMERY’S *EMILY* TRILOGY

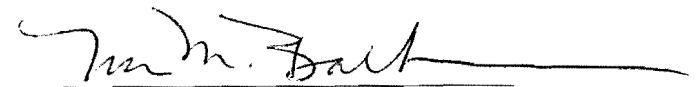
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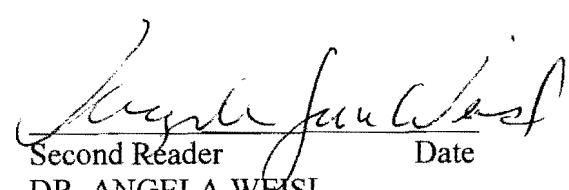
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ABSTRACT

“THAT HOUSE BELONGS TO ME”: THE APPROPRIATION OF SPACE, PLACE, AND HERITAGE IN L.M. MONTGOMERY’S *EMILY* TRILOGY

by

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There is always a special relationship between L.M. Montgomery’s heroines and their surroundings. The *Emily* trilogy is a *Kunstlerroman*—Emily’s authorial coming of age story, but her development is explicitly tied to the spaces which help to define her. Emily is desperately imaginative and often feels trapped by the lack of understanding and sympathy from the representatives, both material and human, of her familial heritage. She struggles to maintain her own voice and artistic life in a world that is not quite hostile, yet is certainly not nurturing of her passion. At the same time, she does not reject these representations outright. Instead, she often reveals a nuanced understanding of the rich inheritance her family background affords. Even when she is offered the opportunity to leave Prince Edward Island and escape the seemingly burdensome weight of her family, Emily resists. As she journeys through her life, Emily gains the understanding that she must balance the inexorable pull of her birthright both as an author and as a Murray woman. Her heritage is as much a part of her as her private imagination and to be divorced from either would place a stranglehold on her life. It is only through reconciling these two opposing sides of herself through her ownership of the Disappointed House and her conscious decision to marry Teddy as her creative and mental equal that Emily is able to come into her own as both a woman and an artist.

In all of her novels L.M. Montgomery builds worlds that are rich with detail—spaces that live with as much passion as the characters with which she peoples her landscapes. There is always a special relationship between her heroines and their surroundings. Even Montgomery's titles express this connection as many of them explicitly tie the main character to the space which defines them: *Anne of Green Gables*, *Jane of Lantern Hill*, and *Emily of New Moon*. The *Emily* trilogy is a *Kunstlerroman*—Emily's authorial coming of age story. Montgomery, through her use of setting, frames Emily's story with home spaces. The trilogy even opens and closes with a specific description of a house. Emily's development as an artist is strongly influenced by each of the houses she inhabits and every significant moment of growth in her life is directly connected to a particular house, even if she never actually lives there. While every house Emily comes in contact with is important, the ones she actually lives in for a lengthy period of time are, obviously, the most significant. Within each of these homes, different rooms and furnishings also have differing influences on Emily's spirit.

Some spaces represent the influential and, at times, oppressive heritage of her mother's family, both past and present. However, even when these rooms and objects restrict her, Emily still embraces them. She has a fierce family pride and, despite her regular clashes with Aunt Elizabeth and Aunt Ruth, the living personifications of the Murray tradition, Emily embraces her heritage wholeheartedly. She does not feel alienated by her past, but instead has a tendency to appropriate spaces as her own, putting them to her own use and determining the kind of influence they will exert. Conversely, when one of her spaces is violated, she feels as though her own soul has been wounded. Throughout the trilogy Montgomery plays with these two seemingly opposing sides of Emily's character.

Emily is desperately imaginative and often feels trapped by the lack of understanding and sympathy from the representatives, both material and human, of her familial heritage. She struggles to maintain her own voice and artistic life in a world that is not quite hostile, yet is certainly not nurturing of her passion. At the same time, she does not reject these representations outright. Instead, she often reveals a nuanced understanding of the rich inheritance her family background affords. Even when she is offered the opportunity to leave Prince Edward Island and escape the seemingly burdensome weight of her family, Emily resists. As she journeys through her life, Emily gains the understanding that she must balance the inexorable pull of her birthright both as an author and as a Murray woman. Her heritage is as much a part of her as her private imagination and to be divorced from either would place a stranglehold on her life. It is only through reconciling these two opposing sides of herself through her ownership of the Disappointed House and her conscious decision to marry Teddy as her creative and mental equal that Emily is able to come into her own as both a woman and an artist.

The majority of criticism about L.M. Montgomery's fiction is biographical. It is difficult to find a single article or book that doesn't juxtapose her fiction with her journals or her life. While this has obviously been helpful in understanding Montgomery's perspective, such an intense focus on the biographical aspect has at times limited the scope of analysis. In the midst of this trend, however, there is another more subtle focus that has permeated much of the Montgomery criticism. Just as most analyses bring in biographical evidence, nearly all critics have dedicated time, and often significant time, to the visual aspect of Montgomery's writing. Discussions of landscape, setting, and the characters' relationship to their external world find their way into many critical studies, but few have made it the focal point of their inquiry. Marilyn Solt is one of these few as she examines "The Uses of Setting in *Anne of Green*

Gables." With Eudora Welty's "Place in Fiction" as the basis of her analysis, Solt shows how Montgomery uses setting to illustrate the passing of time and to accentuate Anne's movement. She describes how "[s]ensory images, so closely interwoven into the story that the reader is scarcely aware of the description as such, bring to life the physical world" (Solt 179). Yet Solt's goal in the piece is to merely bring to light the importance of setting. While she presents several specific examples from *Anne of Green Gables*, she is not attempting to draw any larger conclusions about why the use of setting is so important. Irene Gammel also focuses on *Anne of Green Gables*, but she draws some more specific conclusions concerning the "Embodied Landscape Aesthetics" of the novel. Connecting immersion in nature to Anne's development as a woman and artist, Gammel states that "[b]y involving her senses and body in her exploration of nature's beauty, Anne blurs the boundaries between inside and outside, life and art, human and nature, physical and metaphysical" (229). This blurring of boundaries is something Montgomery develops through nearly all of her books, including the Emily trilogy, where it becomes an important element of Emily's story.

While the focus of this project is to explore the material world and, in particular the houses and spaces surrounding Emily Byrd Starr, material inheritances are closely tied to Emily's familial inheritances. Kate Lawson does not spend much time discussing setting in her article "Adolescence and the Trauma of Maternal Inheritance in L.M. Montgomery's *Emily of New Moon*," but she does point out that, much like "her Murray foremothers, Emily has a deeply traumatic relation to the place she is in, and to the place she has lost" (30). This plays out in Emily's relationships with the strong women and, according to Lawson, the weak if encouraging men in her life. All of Emily's relationships are closely tied to the places in which those relationships take place or develop. Lawson spends more time on setting in her article on "The

Disappointed House.” Citing Freud’s theory of the uncanny, Lawson points out that “Emily’s supernatural vision in each of the three novels relates to a house or homelike space that resonates strongly with her imaginative sense of the familiar” (“Disappointed” 71). Moving through many of the home spaces Emily inhabits and then focusing in on the Disappointed House, Lawson shows how many of them directly impact Emily’s emotional and mental state.

Judith Miller also focuses on familial inheritance, examining the ways Emily’s heritage of domestic arts influences and develops her artistic sensibilities. Miller points out that “Elizabeth preserves a world in which the womanly arts, as she understands them, are protected” and, although Elizabeth does not approve of Emily’s scribblings, she does “provide [Emily] with examples of art—and most especially of patterning” (“Voices”). In her article “The Writer as a Young Woman,” Miller carries this idea further in her discussion of Emily’s familial heritage. As Emily fights to grow as an author and artist, Miller argues that she cannot, and should not, leave her family bonds behind: “the women of her family are of key importance to her … They teach her about language spoken and thought, about artistry, about honour, and about what it means to be a member of the proud Murray family” (“Writer” 311). Emily cannot reach her full potential as an author without understanding the history from which she comes, and it is clear that she does not wish to leave her heritage, whether of history or of domestic arts, behind. Yet this heritage does not come without complications. Cultural repression is a major theme of Faye Hammill’s article on the Emily trilogy. She particularly focuses on the way “Emily is shown to be defined and shaped as much by place as by gender” (103). Even though Hammill focuses on the Canadian heritage of Montgomery’s trilogy, the houses and landscapes Emily inhabits become representations of the cultural impositions Emily must struggle against.

Elizabeth Rollins Epperly, one of the most influential and oft-quoted Montgomery scholars, uses Montgomery's photography to explore Montgomery's "Visual Imagination" in her fiction and her diaries. In her book *Through Lover's Lane* Epperly suggests that "Montgomery's immediate and lasting appeal ... may be found in the way she sees and invites readers to experience the setting for her novels as a landscape of desire" (7). She goes on to say that Montgomery's "visual patterns" have a "metaphoric power that makes her stories convey multiple meanings" (7). Throughout the book Epperly focuses on Montgomery's photography, but she also provides a solid foundation for exploring the world of physical spaces that enriches and complicates Montgomery's heroines. In addition to looking more generically at the way Montgomery encourages a new way of "seeing" the surrounding environment, Epperly also examines the way that "the heroine learns to be as comfortable indoors as outdoors; the novels alternate between interior and exterior descriptions with an ease that suggests how closely the characters identify with the two places" (25). Montgomery photographed her world, both indoors and out, and Epperly looks at the way her photographs echo her descriptions. She spends a great deal of time in the book illustrating how Montgomery uses houses, rooms, and the surrounding landscapes to expose "the domestic and the rituals and beauties of household things" (*Lover's Lane* 76). In her chapter on "Emily's 'Memory Pictures,'" Epperly focuses on Emily's vision and way of seeing, but much of that is mitigated by the houses and landscapes that are an important part of Emily's creative perceptions. While Epperly doesn't focus specifically on objects, her exploration of the significance of the visual in Montgomery's fiction provides a beneficial foundation for exploring the houses and living spaces of the Emily trilogy in further detail.

Providing one of the strongest analyses of material objects in the Emily trilogy, Ian Menzies explores the way Montgomery "undermines the closure-by-marriage requirement of the

genre through a complex set of symbols and markers which are skilfully woven into the text” (48). Citing artifacts like Emily’s boots, the sewing basket, the gazing ball and Teddy’s rose, Menzies clearly illustrates the power the physical world has on Emily’s interior development. Critic Mary Rubio explores Montgomery’s rebellious voice further by analyzing “the way Montgomery both works within the traditional literary genre of domestic romance and yet circumvents its restrictive conventions when she critiques her society” (8). Over and over, critics have explored the tension between cultural norms and the female artist’s desire for expression, and, like so many others, Rubio turns to the rich physical world Montgomery uses to present her message, stating that “she created a space in which [women] could be domestic and yet discuss the inadequacy of that world” (19). While she does not focus on the material world, Rubio’s analysis of the opposing forces Montgomery and her characters had to negotiate provides a helpful foundation for examining the way this tension is expressed through the material aspects of the houses and rooms so important to Emily’s story.

While all of these are useful for establishing a starting point for the development of this study, there are also several works that are invaluable in their perspectives on this topic. Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own*, for example, is often referenced in connection to studies of feminine space and Emily’s use of space is distinctly feminine. She is only able to create when she has appropriated a room or house as her own and her ability to earn money by her pen seems to bear out Woolf’s assertion that “a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction” (4). In addition, Judith Fryer’s book, *Felicitous Space*, though focused on Edith Wharton and Willa Cather, supplies additional insight into the importance of female space and its ability to either free or constrict the women that space contains. Similarly, Gloria Duran’s study “Women and Houses - From Poe to Allende” does not touch on Montgomery in particular

but, through an analysis of Allende's *The House of the Spirits*, presents an interesting perspective on the connection between women and their complicated relationship to their houses.

Gaston Bachelard's book on *The Poetics of Space* also provides a valuable framework for the discussion of material space in Montgomery's trilogy. His ideas concerning the external environment and its connection to dreams, consciousness, and creativity almost sound as though they were written with Emily in mind. For Bachelard, any image or space "that has been seized upon by the imagination cannot remain indifferent space subject to the measures and estimates of the surveyor" (xxxvi). In effect, spaces such as houses, closets, even the outdoors, become more than merely geographical descriptors. They become a part of the artist and must impact the life and memory of those who come in significant contact with them.

For Emily this is particularly true. From the first tiny cottage that holds the memories of her father to the poignant realm of the "Disappointed House," Emily finds more than a simple abode in each of the houses in which she dwells. Montgomery's fascination with houses and their interconnectedness to the growth of an individual permeates all of her fiction, but plays out most overtly in her *Emily* trilogy. Elizabeth Epperly spends quite a bit of time on this fact in *Through Lover's Lane* arguing that "Montgomery's houses have personalities all their own, and they reflect and sometimes shape the personalities within them. ... Houses are dreaming places that hold the echoes of generations" (101-2). In drawing this connection between dreams and the "echoes of generations" Epperly also reveals the complex dichotomy that exists within the trilogy. All of the spaces, both indoor and outdoor, contain this tension between Emily's appropriation of them as inspiration for her imagination and their influence as traditional locations of restriction. The rooms and places of which Emily is able to assume a form of ownership are most supportive of her life as a writer, while those spaces which are imposed upon

her tend to restrict her growth until she is able to adapt them for her own benefit such as the New Moon parlour or her bedroom at Aunt Ruth's house. This illustrates the way that the "relationship to home ... is psychologically more complex for women writers than for men" since "*house* summons up not only the threatening past but also the future" (Duran 10). New Moon, Aunt Ruth's house, and even the Disappointed House represent a past, whether a distant or more recent past, where certain behaviors are expected, and in each case there is a history of both pain and joy that Emily cannot escape. However, in these homes there is also the hope of a future that Emily can shape and claim.

Houses and their surrounding countryside are more than just the set pieces or backdrops against which the action takes place. Through Montgomery's vivid and persistent anthropomorphization of the houses in her fiction, they become characters in their own right and exert as much influence on Emily as any of the human characters do. The trilogy opens with the cottage where Emily lives with her father until his early consumptive death and closes with an image of "the little beloved grey house that was to be disappointed no longer" (*EQ* 228). Montgomery uses these houses to frame Emily's progression from whimsical child to woman fulfilled. Every milestone Emily passes through is emphasized and mirrored by the houses and the spaces in which it takes place. Through the course of her journey, Emily is directly influenced by at least ten different houses, but there are four in particular that are so important to her development that they demand specific examination: the house in the hollow, New Moon, Aunt Ruth's house, and the Disappointed House.

With the opening of *Emily of New Moon* the reader is immediately introduced not to Emily or even her beloved father but to the image of a "house in the hollow" which is "situated in a grassy little dale, looking as if it had never been built like other houses but had grown up

there like a big, brown mushroom" (*ENM* 1). Ellen Green, the woman who comes to cook and clean, sighs over the seclusion of the spot, but Emily does not see it as lonely. The house and the hills in which it is nestled are filled with companions for the young girl: "There was Father—and Mike—and Saucy Sal. The Wind Woman was always around; and there were the trees—Adam-and-Eve, and the Rooster Pine, and all the friendly lady-birches" (*ENM* 1). By situating her heroine so securely in this cozy little home, Montgomery quickly establishes the tone of Emily's childhood. It is clear that she is sheltered and loved and that her imagination is one of the most important parts of her personality.

Since her mother died when Emily was only four, her father has had the sole raising of his daughter. A writer himself, Douglas Starr has fed a love for words and stories in Emily. She lives in a world of nature, fairies, and pure acceptance founded in the little house. Although the Murrays offered to take Emily in after Juliet's death, Douglas rejected every offer and became father, teacher, and confidant. The childlike faith and belief in herself that Douglas fosters in Emily here carries her through her entire life, but particularly through the first few months after his death when the outside world comes to bear and tries to push her into its mold. Bachelard captures the feeling of this first home when he says, "The house we were born in is more than an embodiment of home, it is also an embodiment of dreams. . . . Our habits of a particular daydream were acquired there" (15). Emily's vision of the Wind Woman and her brief wonder moment she calls the *flash* are both born in this house, and while Emily rarely reflects consciously on her first home, its echoes reverberate throughout her imaginative life.

This house is also the first space to shelter Emily's writing. Just before Emily learns of her father's terminal illness, she wanders through the nearby spruce barrens. As the sun sets she is enraptured by the sight and knows "[s]he must go home and write down a description of it in

the yellow account book ... It would hurt her with its beauty until she wrote it down. Then she would read it to Father" (*ENM* 6-7). Even though she is only eight years old, her father is already helping Emily develop into the successful writer she will become. She also learns from her father the joys of reading and the delight in a well-turned phrase. Her wide reading tastes get her in trouble several times with Aunt Elizabeth, and Emily doesn't understand the restrictions Aunt Elizabeth puts in place that her father would never have imposed upon her. In addition, Emily's sharp wit and all too ready tongue, which often cause her to speak without thinking, are easily traced back to the love of language she has inherited from her father. Even Ellen Green picks up on this and says to Emily, "You talk queer—and you act queer—and at times you look queer. And you're too old for your age. ... It comes of never mixing with other children. I've always threatened at your father to send you to school ... but he wouldn't listen to me, of course" (*ENM* 21). Emily will spend many years in school and surrounded by children who become both best friends and bitter enemies, and it is her passion for language and understanding of the world through words that will allow her to survive these encounters. After her father's funeral, Emily curls up in a chair and loses herself in a book—foreshadowing the way she will eventually write her own stories as a way of escaping any less-than-pleasant reality.

The small house is completely Emily's; she belongs there fully and is protected and nurtured there in a way she will never be again. Her father's death devastates her, but even in the midst of her mourning, Emily feels sheltered by the house. However, this house is also the first to experience the desecration of an outsider's censure. The death and burial of Douglas Starr do not mar Emily's memories. It isn't until Aunt Elizabeth tries to read the account book that Emily feels that a line has been crossed. Rather than allow her aunt to read the precious stories and sketches she had written for her father, Emily shoves the book into the fire where she feels as

though a “part of herself were burning there” (*ENM* 47). She mourns the loss of the book with almost as much as fervor as she mourns the passing of her father. After this, Emily is not happy to leave, but she is ready. What little strength she had found in the house seems to burn with the book. When the time comes for her to leave, Emily flits to all her favorite haunts bidding each dear corner goodbye, seeming to know in her heart that an important chapter of her life is closing and that in leaving the house she is also leaving behind her early childhood. New places are awaiting her, along with new responsibilities and new challenges. As the buggy drives away, the house is no longer a sheltering space, but is now a “little, old, brown house” with “a broken-hearted look” (*ENM* 50). Her father’s death, the initial animosity between Emily and her relatives, and the piteous sacrifice of her earliest writings are echoed in Emily’s final vision of the house, bringing tears to her eyes and casting a small shadow on the beginning of her new life at New Moon.

Fortunately, the lessons her father ingrained in her buoy Emily up as she travels to her new home. Her delight in nature distracts her during the drive and as they come down the road toward the house the *flash* arrives “with the sudden glimpse of the dear, friendly, little dormer window peeping through vines on the roof” (*ENM* 53). This is the window in the lookout room, which was Emily’s mother’s and will become Emily’s before too long. Its friendly greeting and the moment of wonder that accompanies it help her to ease into the strangeness of the new house and the uncomfortable first few days of settling into a new life. While her first home provided a solid foundation for the woman she would become, Emily is most closely identified with this ancestral home imbued with the presence of generations of Murrays. The house is not merely a set of walls and rooms: “A house that has been experienced is not an inert box. Inhabited space transcends geometrical space” (Bachelard 47). From the garden, to the old orchard, to the

individual rooms New Moon contains “a certain charm …which Emily felt keenly and responded to, although she was too young to understand it. It was a house which aforetime had had vivid brides and mothers and wives, and the atmosphere of their loves and lives still hung around it” (*ENM* 61). As Emily explores the house and property it quickly proves to be as much a part of her as though she had always lived there. She burns to write of her experiences, but Aunt Elizabeth is spare with paper and Emily has no accounting book any more in which to pour out the visions, both positive and negative, that fill her mind. The stories Cousin Jimmy tells of her ancestors, the fairy paths and shadowy nooks of Lofty John’s Bush, and her first trials at school plague Emily until the fortuitous day when she saves a collection of old letter bills and finally is able to write out all of her joys and sorrows in lengthy letters to her father. Not only is Emily a born storyteller but her early training at her father’s hands and her instinctive response to the family heritage with which she is coming into contact for the first time illustrate Woolf’s comment that “the very walls” of houses “are permeated by [women’s] creative force, which has, indeed, so overcharged the capacity of bricks and mortar that it must needs harness itself to pens and brushes” (87). The generations of strong, opinionated, and passionate women provide a heritage that feeds Emily’s imagination as well as her love for her past. Of all the houses that give Emily shelter, New Moon is the one that represents the depth and breadth of her dreams and imaginings and the complex relationship of her familial culture and heritage.

There are two rooms that best exhibit the constraining influence of the extensive and at times oppressive Murray family: the parlour and the spare room. Emily describes the parlour as being as “dark as a toomb [sic]” (*ENM* 97). Aunt Elizabeth is horrified when Emily tries to bring light into the room and forbids her from entering without permission. This isn’t a hardship, however, as Emily writes, “I am afraid of the parlour. All the walls are hung over with pictures

of our ancestors and there is not one goodlooking person among them except Grand-father Murray who looks handsome but very cross" (*ENM* 98). Even though Emily fears the parlour, she by no means desires to remove it from the house. In fact, Emily's first major argument with her best friend Ilse, arises over the question of whether they should include a parlour in their play house in Lofty John's Bush. No matter how intimidating New Moon's parlour may be, Emily instinctively understands its importance to a proper house. Even in her earliest days at New Moon, Emily exhibits the tension between her imaginative side and her appreciation for the traditions of her mother's family.

In the most intense confrontation between Aunt Elizabeth and Emily, Elizabeth establishes herself in the parlour and calls Emily in to meet her. Elizabeth prefers holding these serious palavers in this room "because she felt obscurely that the photographs of the Murrays on the walls gave her a backing she needed" (*ENM* 309). In her study on parlour culture, Katherine Grier notes that the parlour was "a space that contained the necessary props, held in readiness, for formality. These props offered myriad possibilities for one's temporary self-transformation into a parlor person" (Grier 77-78). This is precisely what happens to Aunt Elizabeth when she establishes herself in the parlour. She becomes even more formal and Emily acknowledges this weight and comes cautiously into the room feeling "like a very small mouse surrounded by a circle of grim cats" (*ENM* 310). Not only is Emily being judged by the living representation of the Murray clan but also by all the other Murrays, both living and dead. In a quick twist, however, Montgomery turns the scene on its head. While the parlour should be a place for the chastisement of Emily's improper behavior, instead it is Elizabeth who is scolded by her young niece – and rightly so. In reading Emily's private letters, Elizabeth invaded her privacy. Her admission of this wrong balances the weight of power between ancestral influence and the

import of Emily's writing. From this point forward the parlour is barely mentioned and its intimidating power over Emily is virtually eliminated. In fact, many years later, Emily appropriates the primness of the parlor by greeting Teddy and Ilse there on one of their visits back to the Island. Rather than sitting chummily in the kitchen or even the warm sitting room, Emily goes "in to the stately, stiff, dignified parlour of New Moon, pale, queenly, aloof" (*EQ* 41). Holding the meeting in the parlour allows Emily to distance herself from the friends that have distanced themselves from her, both by space and by unfulfilled, if unspoken, promises. By claiming the power of the parlour Emily is able to endure what should be an unbearable interview with her dignity intact, though she is far from happy. Even though Emily is eventually able to use the parlour to her own advantage, it is still representative of an overly formal and restrictive part of her heritage both as a woman and as a Murray.

Much like the parlour, the spare room "is just as gloomy" and carries a different kind of connection to the line of Murrays past (*ENM* 98). When Emily disobeys Aunt Elizabeth's injunction to never go into town barefoot, it is the spare room that serves as a punishment for her defiance. While the room itself is large, dim, and unsettling, the truly terrifying aspect for Emily is that "people *had* died in this room—dozens of them. . . . it was a New Moon tradition that when any member of the family was near death he or she was promptly removed to the spare-room, to die amid surroundings of proper grandeur" (*ENM* 111). While the parlour is filled with the portraits of those gone, the spare room is, to Emily, filled with the ghosts of her ancestors as she can "see them dying, in that terrible bed" (*ENM* 111). For breaking Elizabeth's rules of proper behavior, Emily is literally threatened with the weight of every Murray's displeasure. In another parallel between the parlour and spare room, a beam of light falls on "a crayon 'enlargement' copied from the old daguerreotype in the parlour below" of Grandfather Murray.

Haunted as she is by the memory of generations of death, “his face seemed veritably to leap out of the gloom at Emily with its grim frown strangely exaggerated” (*ENM* 111). This breaks Emily and in a terror she flees out of the open window, clambering down a ladder conveniently forgotten, and escapes from the constraints, not only of the room but also of the clan’s influence over her imagination.

However, just as Emily understands the proper place of the parlour, so too she embraces the role of the spare room. After Lofty John claims she has eaten an apple filled with rat poison, Emily flees to the spare bedroom. While she visits the room for a pragmatic reason - it is the only one containing a mirror low enough for her to view her own face - the spare room provides her with the strength to face her doom with poise and confidence. As Emily looks at her face in the mirror, it is as though she is buoyed by “some inheritance from the good old stock behind her” and she declares, “I don’t want to die but since I have to I’ll die as becomes a Murray” (*ENM* 136). The unseen presence of generations of Murrays embodied in the room where so many have died provides Emily with a certain strength and allows her to calmly face the terrors that have come to her from the outside world.

While the parlor and spare room represent the weighty presence of Emily’s ancestors, the kitchen becomes more of a middle space bridging the past and present. On her arrival at New Moon, Emily’s first impression of the kitchen is mixed. In the dim candlelight it seems “creepy” and “spookish” and she “didn’t know whether she liked the New Moon kitchen or not. It was an interesting place” (*ENM* 54). Above all it is “interesting” and, while she withholds judgment temporarily, Emily is more intrigued than frightened. The next morning, in full daylight, the kitchen loses its uncanniness and becomes a place for comfort, family, and friendship. The kitchen is the scene of Emily’s most positive connections to her family heritage. It is here that

she learns the arts of baking, canning, and cooking from Aunt Laura and it is with great pride that Emily learns how to sand the kitchen floor in the famous herring-bone pattern passed down from her great-great-grandmother, which “[e]ven Aunt Elizabeth had condescended to say that Emily” did “very well” (*EC* 60). Instead of eschewing the domestic activities as many imaginative and artistic heroines do, Emily embraces them. She yearns to learn how to skim the milk pans, revels in her ability to make a cake as well as Aunt Elizabeth, and is horribly embarrassed when she fails to serve tea properly when company visits.

In many ways Emily seems to feed creatively off the traditional household tasks her aunts teach her. Bachelard asserts that when “we apply a glimmer of consciousness to a mechanical gesture … we sense new impressions come into being beneath this familiar domestic duty. For consciousness rejuvenates everything, giving a quality of beginning to the most everyday actions” (67). Domesticity is not a trap for Emily because she applies her mind to it and acknowledges the way these simple (and not so simple) exercises are a tangible link to those who have come before. The floor is worn down from sanding because of the generations of Murray women who have worked and loved and sorrowed on that floor, and by performing the same actions, she is reviving and perpetuating them and their memory. Choosing to wholeheartedly assume much of the past, Emily “rejects the restrictions which her family attempt[s] to place on her writing and self-expression” and “distills the valuable elements from their creed, such as honour, integrity, honesty and pride in one’s ancestors. Emily is ultimately sustained by the ‘Murray traditions’ because she has refused to let them define her” (Hammill 102-3). By holding onto the lessons she is taught in the kitchen, Emily adopts it as an important part of herself and acknowledges the positive aspects of her family heritage.

The kitchen is the main communal space of the house, but, as much as Emily enjoys her time there, it lacks the privacy she needs to write. Aunt Elizabeth disapproves of Emily's authorial ambitions and, while Emily refuses to hide her writing from her aunt, she also cannot think, dream, and write freely in a space dominated by such a censuring presence. During her early years Emily even shares a bedroom with Aunt Elizabeth. Therefore, the only space in the house that she can appropriate as her own is the garret. A dormer window nook provides the perfect place for her to write long letters to her father, and gives her a "favourite haunt," in which her uncomfortable habit of thinking of things thousands of miles away could not vex Aunt Elizabeth" (*ENM* 93). The letters, poems, and stories Emily begins writing in this space allow her to mourn properly for her father, to give reign to her imagination, and to write out the frustrations and hurts – both real and imagined – she endures. Even after she moves into her lookout room, she keeps her letters and scribblings tucked away in the garret.

It isn't until Aunt Elizabeth desecrates this creative space that Emily moves all of her writing life into her bedroom. Stumbling across the letters Emily has secreted in the garret Aunt Elizabeth reads them all. Wounded by the harsh perspective her niece portrays in letters written in the heat of anger or indignation, Aunt Elizabeth confronts Emily, but it is Emily who proves to be the most wounded. In the chapter entitled "Sacrilege," Montgomery describes Emily's reaction in the most serious of terms: "Sacrilege had been committed—the most sacred shrine of her soul had been profaned" (*ENM* 310). Emily flees to her lookout, not the garret. While aunt and niece do reconcile, the damage is done. Emily tucks her letters into a cabinet in her bedroom and the garret remains all but abandoned. Aunt Elizabeth's intrusion destroys the safe space the garret had become and Emily feels the loss deeply. It was the only interior room to provide solace to her as a lonely little girl and, according to Bachelard,

all the spaces of our past moments of solitude, the spaces in which we have suffered from solitude ... remain indelible within us ... even when it is forever expunged from the present, when, henceforth, it is alien to all the promises of the future, even when we no longer have a garret, when the attic room is lost and gone, there remains the fact that we once loved a garret, once lived in an attic. (10)

While the garret was a haven only for a short period of time, its echoes remain with Emily and, many years later, it is the garret where Emily deposits her completed manuscript of *The Moral of the Rose* for safekeeping until the time is right for it to be published.

The loss of the garret causes Emily to cling even harder to her new bedroom and the privacy it affords: "She did not go now to the garret to read or write or dream; her own dear lookout was the best place for that. She loved that quaint, little old room intensely; it was almost like a living thing to her—a sharer in gladness—a comforter in sorrow" (ENM 315-6). Of all the New Moon rooms, the lookout bedroom is the most significant for Emily's development as a woman and an author. Within about a six month period during her twelfth year several events take place which create a distinct shift in Emily's life. Not only is she physically moving from child to young woman but she also grows emotionally and creatively. While there are many such instances in her life, this condensed period, centered around her movement into her own creative space, marks a distinct maturation of Emily as woman and artist and begins with her movement to her own room. Having her own space allows Emily the privacy her soul needs to grow and mature as well as the protection and comfort she has not really experienced since her father's death.

By moving into her mother's old room, Emily is able, as Elizabeth Epperly states in *Through Lover's Lane*, "to meet her own dead mother in a space resounding with cultural and

familial echoes” (93). Only by coming into the old sanctuary of her mother’s maiden dreams is Emily able to begin fully realizing her own dreams as a woman. As much as she loves New Moon, this private space within the ancestral home is central to Emily’s emotional and creative growth. Every detail of the room is explored and nothing is found wanting. Emily feels no reticence about claiming it as her own: “[t]his was her room—she loved it already—she felt perfectly at home” (*ENM* 285). Unlike many of the other spaces in her life, this room does not have to be appropriated; it is already a part of her and belongs to her from the first moment she steps inside. From the decor her mother left behind to the wallpaper to the cozy fireplace, each aspect is important, but perhaps none moreso than the window that overlooks the gardens, the same window that winked to her in welcome on her first arrival at New Moon. Epperly points out that “[i]n giving Emily the room, Aunt Elizabeth renews the tradition of giving a young girl the dreaming space facing Cousin Jimmy’s enchanted garden, protected by Lofty John’s bush, and tied to the past and the present by glimpses of the Yesterday Road” (*Lover’s* 93). This “dreaming space” is important as it not only connects Emily to her mother but also to her father, the man her mother dreamed about when she lived in the room. The father who fostered all of her early fantasies and writer’s dreams is made even more real through the tangible reminders of the young girl her mother used to be.

Even though the room is not an actual tower, the lookout plays the role of “the ideal tower that haunts all dreamers of old houses” that Bachelard speaks of as the “abode of a gentle young girl … haunted by memories of an ardent ancestress” which “stands high and alone, keeping watch over the past in the same way that it dominates space” (24). This “ardent ancestress” could be the generations of strong women whose spirits and stories haunt every corner of New Moon and its surroundings. Emily pictures many of them over and over

throughout her life, drawing strength and inspiration from the rich history of the house. However, as her mother's old bedroom, the lookout specifically invokes the memory of Juliet and her love for her husband and daughter. Emily spends time dreaming out the window waiting for Teddy's whistle from Lofty John's Bush in much the same way Juliet must have waited for Douglas. At the same time, images of Aunt Elizabeth's fervent care for the house itself and her abiding desire to keep things precisely the way they should be also come to mind. With this long history of passionate women behind her, Emily seems destined to carry on the traditions of her aunts while still making her own way just as her mother did.

During this same period Mr. Carpenter takes over the local school. In many ways he becomes the father-figure Emily lost with the desecration of her letters to her father. Just as her father encouraged Emily's early writings and imaginings, now Mr. Carpenter offers more mature guidance, encouragement, and honest opinions of Emily's writing. It is also at this juncture that Emily submits her first poem for publication and receives her first of many rejections. She is ready to subject her work, and therefore herself, to the scrutiny of others. Writing becomes less an internal coping mechanism and more an outpouring of her own ideas, which Emily is ready to begin offering to the larger world. The independence represented by the move to her own room plays out in her psychological and creative development as well.

Over the years Emily's lookout room repeatedly offers her a haven from every disappointment and trial, yet it is also the site of many of her most shattering heartbreaks. There is a three year period during which she lives with her Aunt Ruth in Shrewsbury while attending high school. This time is significant and the shift from New Moon to Shrewsbury and back again is one that bears further investigation. However, for continuity's sake, it makes sense to move

ahead to Emily's return to New Moon in *Emily's Quest* and her final years in the lookout bedroom before entering a discussion of a new space.

After her time at Shrewsbury Emily returns to her room with delight, but as the years continue to pass and she finds herself left at New Moon while her closest friends are gaining material and social success in the wider world, the room becomes less and less of a sanctuary. It is more of a young girl's room, and as she enters womanhood she longs for more than just one room to call her own. Not that she wishes to give up her writing career, but she is ready to also become the head of her own household. Her room is the place where she both waits for and rejects Teddy's summoning whistle. It is the place where she fights and laughs with Ilse. It is the home of her dreams but also the scene of the greatest blow to her writing career, something which effectively taints its comfort.

When Dean tells Emily that her book *A Seller of Dreams* is mere "cobwebs" – "pretty and flimsy and ephemeral as a rose-tinted cloud" and not worth pursuing – Emily returns to her room and slowly, carefully, almost methodically, places the manuscript in the grate which has offered her so many nights of cheerful warmth (*EQ* 51). The burning of her manuscript is a calmer reflection of the burning of her first book of fantasies just before coming to New Moon. Dean's opinion, to which Emily gives such great credence, provides the same kind of desecration as Aunt Elizabeth's threat to read the account book and her actual reading of Emily's letters from the garret. This time, however, the defilement reaches into the inner sanctuary of Emily's life. This is not a garret or a house she is about to leave; it is the room she must continue to inhabit and, therefore, the ramifications are drastic and immediate. As soon as she burns the manuscript she is seized with regret and suddenly "[h]er little room, generally so dear and beloved and cosy, seemed like a prison" and she must go "[o]ut—somewhere—into the cold, free autumn night

with its grey ghost-mists—away from walls and boundaries—away from that little heap of dark flakes in the grate—away from the reproachful ghosts of her murdered book folks (*EQ* 53-4). In her frantic flight Emily tumbles down the stairs and matches her internal psychological injury with a physical one. Her foot is maimed and she nearly loses her leg, but the greater loss is her sudden antipathy to writing.

During this period virtually nothing is said about the lookout room. Since her bedroom was indicative of Emily's creative spark, it is no longer important once she has lost that spark. Dean's presence during her convalescence is representative of his larger intrusion on her inner life as well. Dean's disdain for Emily's writing is not because she is a poor writer or because her work is no good. Instead, it illustrates the "masculine complex" Woolf references in *A Room of One's Own*: "That deep-seated desire, not so much that *she* shall be inferior as that *he* shall be superior, which plants him wherever one looks, not only in front of the arts, but barring the way to politics too, even when the risk to himself seems infinitesimal and the suppliant humble and devoted" (55). From the beginning of their relationship Dean rejects Emily's talent and shows continuous jealousy at her absorption in her writing. When she is wrapped up in her art even he cannot enter, and he refuses to allow anything to come between him and his full claim of her. Once Emily has lost her desire to write and accepted his marriage proposal he tells her they will set aside a corner for her writing desk saying he hated it before because he "was afraid it would take [her] away from [him]" (*EQ* 78). But even in this concession he still asserts his dominance over her by only allotting her a portion of the main room not a separate space.

Dean does not want to be closed out by the all-consuming passion Emily has for her writing. It isn't until she breaks off the engagement that he admits the truth and frees Emily from the blasphemy that has haunted her room ever since she burned her manuscript. Dean is not only

the agent of disillusionment who destroyed her literary dreams, he has become a continual constraining influence against Emily's personal growth. As Elizabeth Epperly states, "[i]n struggling against [Dean], Emily Starr is fighting against the collective weight of male privilege and authority. ... Emily wins, keeps her voice, and is true to the imaginative influences that have enriched her individuality" (*Fragrance* 148). Almost as soon as they part ways Emily returns to her room, dreaming and writing in her journal for the first time since her tumble down the stairs. She cheerily notes: "to-night I've been sitting here in my dear old room, with my dear books and dear pictures and dear little window of the kinky panes, dreaming in the soft, odorous summer twilight" (*EQ* 105). Her return to her room signifies her return to writing and to the spark of life that has been missing for so many months.

However, the room is never quite the same. It is still an important space, but Emily spends more time thinking about the opportunities that have passed her by and wondering about the people that have left childhood, and therefore her, far behind rather than delighting in the room as a haven. In a fit of pique one day Emily throws the old "vaseful of dyed grasses" out the window, writing later that she "simply could not endure" them any more (*EQ* 155). In this small way, Emily rebels against the confinement she feels in the house. Ironically Cousin Jimmy quietly returns the grasses, and Emily replaces them with a sigh, accepting the fact that she cannot escape her reality in such a simple way. During this period Emily speaks often of wandering through the hills, gardens, and trees, escaping the house and her room as often as possible. It is one gloomy day, "as she sat idly by her window looking rather drearily out on cold meadows and hills of grey, over which a chilly, lonesome wind blew" that Emily's grand idea arrives (*EQ* 144). She decides to write a book to amuse Aunt Elizabeth who has broken her leg and is confined even more than Emily herself. Her room becomes the location of inspiration once

again, and every night Emily falls into the throes of writing with a passion and intensity she has missed for so long. In the act of creation Emily is able to push away the disappointments of her last meeting with Teddy and become the writer and, therefore, the woman she needs to be. It is necessary for Emily to reach maturation as an artist before she is able to come into full psychological and emotional maturation as well. She cannot leave the bedroom which has sheltered her literary ambitions and claim her rights as the mistress of her own house until she has embraced her own success first. Once her book has been published and her stories and poems are being regularly accepted and printed, Emily is ready to create a new inheritance through her marriage to Teddy as her intellectual, psychological, emotional, and creative equal in the feminine appropriated space of the Disappointed House.

Having traced the influence of the lookout room through the first and third novels of the trilogy, it is now important to go back to *Emily Climbs* to examine the period which takes place almost exclusively apart from both New Moon and the comfort of Emily's bedroom. Her move to Shrewsbury to attend high school heightens the tension of two opposing forces. On the one hand she is receiving further education along with the life experiences that will inspire and help her to develop academically and personally. However, the move also requires Emily to leave New Moon and live with her restrictive and accusatory Aunt Ruth. As she prepares to leave, Emily realizes that “[i]t was all very well to be going to school—but to leave dear New Moon! Everything at New Moon was linked with her life and thoughts—was a part of her” (*EC* 93). Her personal history has become inextricably linked to the house, her room, and even the ancestors who have imbued the house with a sense of history and life that Aunt Ruth’s more modern house completely lacks. Aunt Ruth’s house mirrors its owner’s personality and the restrictions imposed on Emily both physically and creatively. If, as Bachelard says, one “experiences the house in its

reality and in its virtuality, by means of thought and dreams" (5) it is no wonder that Aunt Ruth's house retains its formal newness. Aunt Ruth is practical and unimaginative. Her house has not "lived" in the way Emily's first home, New Moon, or even the Disappointed House have. While the other houses are very much characters in the narrative of Emily's life, Aunt Ruth's house is merely a stopping place – important as a set piece, but never destined to become a part of Emily's soul the way the others are.

Emily speaks little of the rooms in her temporary residence, but what she does note is hardly positive. On her first night she writes in her diary, "I shall never like Aunt Ruth's house. It has a disagreeable personality. Houses are like people—some you like and some you don't like—and once in a while there is one you love. Outside, this house is covered with frippery. I feel like getting a broom and sweeping it off. Inside, its rooms are all square and proper and soulless" (*EC* 101). The rooms are "soulless" representing the way neither Aunt Ruth nor her house fosters intimacy of any kind. Emily mentions the formal and "up-to-date" dining-room, which is "not half as 'friendly' as the old New Moon room," along with a parlour which is used less as a connection to some larger familial group and more as a place to receive callers and establish status (*EC* 97-8). This illustrates the largest difference between Aunt Ruth's house and New Moon: the lack of history. Where the other houses in Emily's life hold a past that is significant and influential, Aunt Ruth's house is comparatively new and representative of Aunt Ruth's own status in the community, rather than her status in relation to the rest of the Murrays. She is the only sister who has married and therefore changed her name from Murray to Dutton. Her husband is dead and barely even mentioned, but her name, location, and house separate her from the rest of the Murray family. As a result of her distance from the tangible history of the

clan, Aunt Ruth also disconnects herself from the joys, sorrows, and richly storied past that might allow her to better understand and connect with Emily.

As annoyed as Emily is with the house in general, she is even more depressed when it comes to the room Aunt Ruth assigns to her. The room is, quite plainly, “ugly” with a “slanting ceiling” that “was rain stained, and came down so close to the bed that she could touch it with her hand” (*EC* 96). The low ceiling and Aunt Ruth’s injunction that the window remain closed cause the room to close in on Emily. Rather than being a space that opens Emily’s imagination and allows her to dream, it instead becomes a sign of the suffocation of Aunt Ruth’s strict rules and the hesitant agreement Emily made with Aunt Elizabeth to not write fiction while at Shrewsbury. Removed from the heritage that has become so much a part of her and prohibited from engaging in her major creative outlet, Emily can’t help but feel that the “room is unfriendly” and that she “can *never* feel at home” there (*EC* 96). The walls are a dark brown and the pictures relegated to that room are gloomy and not at all inspiring. The one item described in excruciating detail, the garish rug on the floor, is an insult to Emily’s sensibilities, but the narrator informs us that it is not to Aunt Ruth’s taste either, being a gift from a distant relative. This exemplifies the way nothing really belongs in Aunt Ruth’s house. Unlike Emily’s lookout bedroom, not to mention the other New Moon rooms, these rooms are stiff and awkward and lack the livability Emily is used to.

In addition to the hideous decor, the door does not close, removing Emily’s sense of privacy. Not only does the room not belong to her but it is also not a “secluded space in which” she can “hide, or withdraw,” and which is “a symbol of solitude for the imagination” (Bachelard 136). A door that cannot be closed, much less locked, removes any possibility of Emily avoiding Aunt Ruth’s regular intrusions on both physical and mental space. In *Felicitous Space* Judith

Fryer notes that “[d]oors that lock and bolt mark the boundaries between public and private spaces” (11). Emily has no real private space in Shrewsbury. Every action she takes is open to Aunt Ruth’s scrutiny and disapprobation. Her friends are not allowed to visit and even her bedtime and extracurricular activities are regulated. This is not to say Emily has no freedom, but her years in Aunt Ruth’s house are considerably more constrained than her life at New Moon.

Her writing follows a similar pattern. Restricted from writing anything that isn’t true, she struggles to find a creative outlet through poetry and essays. Two full years of strict control not only renew her love for writing fiction but also teach her the “restraint and economy” Mr. Carpenter avers is lacking in her writing (*EC* 92). In addition, Emily begins submitting poems and short stories to various magazines. She opens her writing up to public scrutiny, receiving even more censure from the outside world than from her own family. As is so often true of Emily’s life journey, outward patterns match inward ones. Through her time in Shrewsbury Emily “is learning to know herself and is constantly exercising her new voice. She must frequently defy Aunt Ruth, another gatekeeper for the establishment; she is sensitive to criticism from others and is still shaping herself, in some ways, according to what others think of her abilities” (Epperly *Fragrance* 169). Slowly her writing is accepted by local papers and some smaller magazines, but she often wonders whether she will ever reach the heights of “alpine glory” that she is aiming for. She perseveres, but the first years of more rejections than acceptances are almost as wearing on her spirit as Aunt Ruth’s hovering negativity.

However, over the course of the three years Emily spends in Shrewsbury, her presence and, therefore, the Murray connection, slowly infiltrates the house until she is able to say she is “oddly sorry to leave” her room in Aunt Ruth’s house upon graduation (*EC* 324). While she is not allowed to move the bed or take down the prints on the wall, Emily is able to hang her own

pictures and the room slowly fills with the writing paraphernalia, New Moon articles such as candles and hot water bottles, and the girlish presence she provides. When Emily gives Aunt Ruth a center-piece which she has embroidered herself for her birthday, Aunt Ruth reveals her oft-suppressed family pride and shows it off to a visitor with a warmth she rarely shows her niece, saying, “See how beautifully it is done—she is very skilful [sic] with her needle” (*EC* 165-6). This small detail subtly shows the importance the domestic arts she learned from Aunt Elizabeth and Aunt Laura still hold for Emily. Rather than rejecting this aspect of her heritage as too restrictive, Emily embraces it and is proud to add to Aunt Ruth’s house a handmade article that “reflect[s] a woman’s accomplishments in the household” (Grier 98). Emily is flabbergasted at Aunt Ruth’s approbation and with the center-piece placed conspicuously on display, she finds a connection to her aunt that had hitherto been lacking. Through this tangible evidence of their familial bond, Aunt Ruth acknowledges her investment in her niece’s well-being and provides a hint of the staunch supporter she will become later when Emily falls victim to vicious rumors. While aunt and niece never fully reconcile, their temperaments too much at odds to allow such a conciliatory ending, their mutual heritage is what brings them together, even in just a few small ways.

While Aunt Ruth’s house is mostly inhospitable, it is neighbor to an outside space that provides Emily with freedom and succor. Emily writes that the “Land of Uprightness is beautiful and saves [her] soul alive” (*EC* 104). The “Land of Uprightness” is a grove of fir trees just behind Aunt Ruth’s cluttered house and one of the only spaces in Shrewsbury where Emily feels she can be herself. When describing Aunt Ruth’s home Emily sighs that “[t]here are no nice romantic corners in it” (*EC* 101). The Land of Uprightness, on the other hand, has “so many dear, green corners” (*EC* 104). Nearly every time Emily has a disagreement with Aunt Ruth or

feels frustrated, saddened, or merely out of sorts, she makes her way outside. The romance, mystery, and fantasy that are missing from her aunt's house can be found in great quantity in the quiet shady spot where Emily likes to study and write. As she writes in her journal, "Somehow, my books have a *meaning* there they never have anywhere else" (EC 104). In the middle of Shrewsbury's inhospitality, Emily is able to find a retreat that welcomes and comforts her. The Land of Uprightness is an important space for Emily, but the fact that it is outdoors also makes it less available. Poor weather, impending illness, or simply wrong timing keeps Emily from escaping to its peace. While the outdoor spaces are life-giving, they cannot replace the indoor spaces that are much more present and accessible. Emily loves these spaces, but does not completely rely on them. She learns to balance her imaginative personality with necessary practicality.

This practicality, combined with her passion for New Moon after three years' absence, is what keeps Emily from taking Miss Royal up on her offer to join her in New York. Bachelard states that "we know perfectly that we feel calmer and more confident when in the old home ... than we do in the houses on streets where we have only lived as transients" (43). Her temporary and partial exile from New Moon has reinforced its importance to Emily. While she knows that there are major career advantages in the move to New York, she is now able to see that her family, community, and heritage are such an integral part of her life that to be removed from them would in effect cripple her as an artist. Though she considers the offer carefully and knows that Miss Royal thinks her a fool for throwing away such a grand opportunity, Emily also comes to realize that the losses she would incur would be far greater. But it isn't only the history and the familiarity that Emily wants to hold onto. Miss Royal is unmarried and, though Canadian by birth, quite Americanized. She has no real connection to domesticity or any of the home arts that

Emily loves. While her writing career might be accelerated by the move, Emily would also be giving up her connection to Prince Edward Island and, more importantly, her eventual future with Teddy. Although Emily is not ready for this future to come yet, there is a part of her that realizes it is linked to the spaces where their relationship began. Elizabeth Epperly points out that Emily can't make her decision until she "accepts the lesson: she must decide for herself, know her own mind. Then the decision is effortless" (*Fragrance* 180). Once Emily claims New Moon and its surroundings as her chosen place of residence she is able to firmly refuse Miss Royal and begin her career as a writer in earnest.

Other than New Moon, only the "Disappointed House" has as significant and immense an influence on Emily's growth as a woman and an author. In her first days at New Moon, as is her nature, Emily notes the houses surrounding her. While she notes the manse, the home to her future best friend, Ilse, it is another house that catches her attention:

Off to the right, on the crest of a steep little hill, covered with young birches and firs, was a house that puzzled and intrigued Emily. It was grey and weather worn, but it didn't look old. It had never been finished; the roof was shingled but the sides were not, and the windows were boarded over. Why had it never been finished? And it was meant to be such a pretty little house—a house you could love—a house where there would be nice chairs and cozy fires and bookcases and lovely, fat, purry cats and unexpected corners; then and there she named it the Disappointed House, and many an hour thereafter did she spend finishing that house, furnishing it as it should be furnished, and inventing the proper people and animals to live in it. (*ENM* 65)

Emily returns to her fantasy of decorating the forlorn house on many occasions. The emptiness of the abandoned house reflects her own loneliness after the death of her father and Emily comforts herself by imagining its rooms filled and warm.

After she has had time to settle into her new life and has developed friendships with Ilse, Perry, and Teddy, Emily does not abandon the Disappointed House, but she does begin to create new dreams for it. In one of her many letters to her dead father, Emily exclaims, “Oh, Father, I’ve just thought of something nice. When I grow up and write a great novel and make lots of money, I will buy the Disappointed House and finish it. Then it won’t be Disappointed any more” (*ENM* 213). Rather than sympathizing with the empty house and decorating it with dream images, Emily claims ownership of it. The sense of family and friendship that has filled her own life causes her to reach out with a vision of a happy and possessable future for the house on the hill. She rehearses this future when she and Teddy break into the house, light a fire in the fireplace, “and then [sit] before it on an old carpenter’s bench and talk” about how they will buy the house together, and “Teddy will paint pictures and [Emily] will write poetry and [they] will have toast and bacon and marmalade *every morning* for breakfast” (*ENM* 287-8). For months afterward Teddy and Emily refer to “bacon and marmalade” as a reminder of their secret. It is a special bond between them and imbues a spark of life into the house that stands uninhabited for so many years. This is the first sign of life the house ever experiences and it foreshadows the real future Emily and Teddy will one day share in it.

The memory of the fire and their subsequent conversation stays with Emily for years. At times she draws comfort from the remembrance, but at other times it is a harsh reminder of a future she believes she has lost. During her high school years, just after receiving the first fruits of her writing labor, Emily walks past the Disappointed House. The house’s “windows seem

peering wistfully from its face as if seeking vainly for what they cannot find. ... And yet [Emily feels], somehow, that the little house has kept its dream and that sometime it will come true" (*EC* 162-3). In the middle of her early success as an author and her musings over the progress she and her friends, and particularly Teddy, have made over the last year at school, Emily is hopeful and projects her optimism on the house, again wishing that she owned it.

However, by the beginning of *Emily's Quest*, she has lost much of this optimism. High school has ended and Emily has returned home. She made the choice willingly, but a return to the quieter world of New Moon while all of her close friends have moved away causes Emily a number of "terrible, black three-o'clocks and lonely, discouraged twilights" (*EQ* 17). Rather than seeing hope in the empty house, Emily is reminded of her own loneliness and, remembering the long past fireside chat with Teddy, laments that the house will "always be disappointed" (*EQ* 17).

After her accident and her sudden engagement, Dean surprises Emily with the Disappointed House as an engagement gift. Emily convinces herself that she will be happy and content with Dean, even if she will never feel the kind of passionate love she once dreamed of and this emotion is directly tied to the ownership of the house. She and Dean spend a "happy summer" filling the house with all their varied possessions creating "a sense of harmony" in the house, which Emily also tries desperately to project onto their relationship (*EQ* 82). The house is harmonious, but Emily, try as she might, can't shake the feeling that she is more excited about the house than she is about Dean. Emily throws herself into her bridal preparations, completely renouncing the artistic side of her spirit and clinging to the safety of the "most potent and least acknowledged of [New Moon's] beliefs: the man rules and the woman obeys" (Epperly *Fragrance* 187). While Emily would never openly admit to this, her capitulation to Dean's

desires throughout their engagement proves the danger he presents to her full self. Even though they decorate the house together and seem to be on equal footing, Dean is the one who makes most of the major plans. He purchases and owns the house; he makes plans for the wedding and honeymoon which are only delayed because of Aunt Elizabeth. He takes advantage of Emily's lethargy and becomes even more condescending toward her lost dreams of authorship. Epperly goes on to point out that "since family and clan do not approve of Dean, he has the added attractiveness of appearing to be different from them – and Emily can pride herself on seeming to make her own choice in their very teeth" (*Fragrance* 187). Emily's ready acceptance of Dean's proposal, and her antipathy toward most of the things she used to hold most dear, worries her aunts, but Emily brushes their concern aside with a weariness that is telling. It is only when she is in the Disappointed House that Emily becomes herself again. She will quibble with Dean over where to hang the pictures and argue over what furnishings belong where. In her deepest heart Emily recognizes that the house is connected to a much older dream, and when she inadvertently substitutes Teddy for Dean in one of her happy reveries, she tries to convince herself that it was a "mere trick of memory" (*EQ* 82).

At the end of the summer they lock the doors and leave the house for spring, when they plan on entering it as bride and groom. In the middle of the winter, Emily slips up the hill to see "*her* home," convinced that "[i]n its charm and sanity vague, horrible fears and doubts would vanish" (*EQ* 86). But the fears and doubt don't vanish. In fact, the house itself calls Emily to Teddy's side as, in an inexplicable moment of connection, Emily somehow saves Teddy from boarding a doomed ship and realizes that she can never marry Dean. Just as its first master was jilted, Emily gives Dean back his ring and they part ways on the lawn of the house. Instead of welcoming its first inhabitants the Disappointed House "was still to be haunted by the ghosts of

things that never happened" (*EQ* 98). The house, decorated and expectant, once again echoes Emily. On the surface she continues contentedly, writing, publishing, cheerfully helping Ilse plan her wedding to Teddy, and smoothing out the aftermath when Ilse leaves Teddy at the altar. However, like the house, inside Emily feels empty and cold and haunted by her own things that should have but never did happen.

As the next several years pass, Emily applies herself to her writing, but she mourns the loss of the house even more than she mourns the loss of Dean's friendship. She writes in her journal, "I never go where I can see it. But I *do* see it for all that. Waiting there on its hill—waiting—dumb—blind" (*EQ* 101). In her own melancholic state, she feels a kinship to the house, just as she has throughout her life. During the final winter of the trilogy, Emily wanders past the Disappointed House, seeing in the abandoned structure an image of her present barren situation. She muses that the "little house must be very cold. It was so long since there was a fire in it. ... how heartbroken it looked" and she remembers the "old fireplace in that house—with the ashes of a dead fire in it" (*EQ* 224). After the disastrous and aborted wedding, Teddy leaves the Island with no reason to return. Dean stays away, nursing his broken heart, and Ilse and Perry offer invitations, but Emily knows that they are too caught up in each other to provide her the kind of rest she longs for. Emily leaves the house, certain that they both must resign themselves to lives of emptiness. However, mere months after her final assessment of the house and herself as forever neglected, Teddy arrives, bringing spring to her heart. Having achieved success as an author in her own right and coming to an understanding of her desires and passions, Emily is ready to receive him. Teddy has lost the self-importance that marked his earlier returns to the Island and is fully ready to accept and support Emily as an equal in art and life. By delaying this seemingly inevitable end, Montgomery doesn't merely capitulate to convention. Elizabeth

Epperly argues that “Emily’s love for Teddy is a source of happiness, not a fetter” since “Teddy has complete faith in Emily and her voices” (*Fragrance* 179). In contrast to her relationship with Dean, Teddy is her psychological, economical, and emotional equal, her psychic double who will allow her to fulfill both sides of her self, both the artistic and the domestic. Montgomery allows Emily to marry on her own terms and in her own time and provides the backdrop of a house that will finally reach its fulfillment along with her. Dean sends Emily the deed to the Disappointed House and writes that the “house must not be disappointed again. I want it to live at last” (*EQ* 228). The house is now quite literally a space of Emily’s own, which brings together the new life of love and art she will enjoy with Teddy and the family heirlooms that now fill the rooms with a perfect blend of past and future. Since New Moon will revert to her male cousin, Emily must become the first in a new line of strong ancestresses to inspire and affect future generations, this time in a feminine owned space. The Disappointed House, “apprehended in its dream potentiality, becomes a nest in the world” where Emily and Teddy can “live … in complete confidence” (Bachelard 103). Despite their many broken and unfulfilled dreams, both Emily and the house can finally live the lives for which they have struggled. In the final sentence of the trilogy, Emily waits for Teddy with the satisfying prospect of “the little beloved grey house that was to be disappointed no longer” before her (*EQ* 228).

Whether it is the house that fostered her first dreams, the home that helped to shape her as an artist, the house that restricted and taught her economy, or the final home of fulfilled promises, Emily establishes her identity through the spaces she inhabits. As she appropriates the various rooms and spaces, she also imbues her spirit into them and uses them as memory holders of her past, adding to the layers of story already present in each dwelling. By using the past to claim her rightful inheritance as writer and Murray woman, Emily learns how to reconcile the

two often opposing sides of her nature. As houses confine, define, and refine Emily, she develops from an innocent, imaginative child, into an intelligent artist and woman who knows her own mind and is able to finally embrace a future of her own choosing.

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