Mental Health and Resilience in the Emily Trilogy: Emily Byrd Starr and Cousin Jimmy through the Lens of Garden Therapy

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In the *Emily* trilogy, among the characters struggling through arduous circumstances, Emily and Cousin Jimmy stand out because they hone their powers to overcome adversity through gardening. Applying the twenty-first-century concepts of resilience and gardening therapy, this paper analyzes the role that gardens and gardening play in the development of resilience and mental well-being that underpin—and are underpinned by—the creative endeavours of Emily and Cousin Jimmy.

A loss of something ever felt I—

The first that I could recollect

Bereft I was—of what I knew not

Too young that any should suspect

—Emily Dickinson Fr1072, ll. 1–41

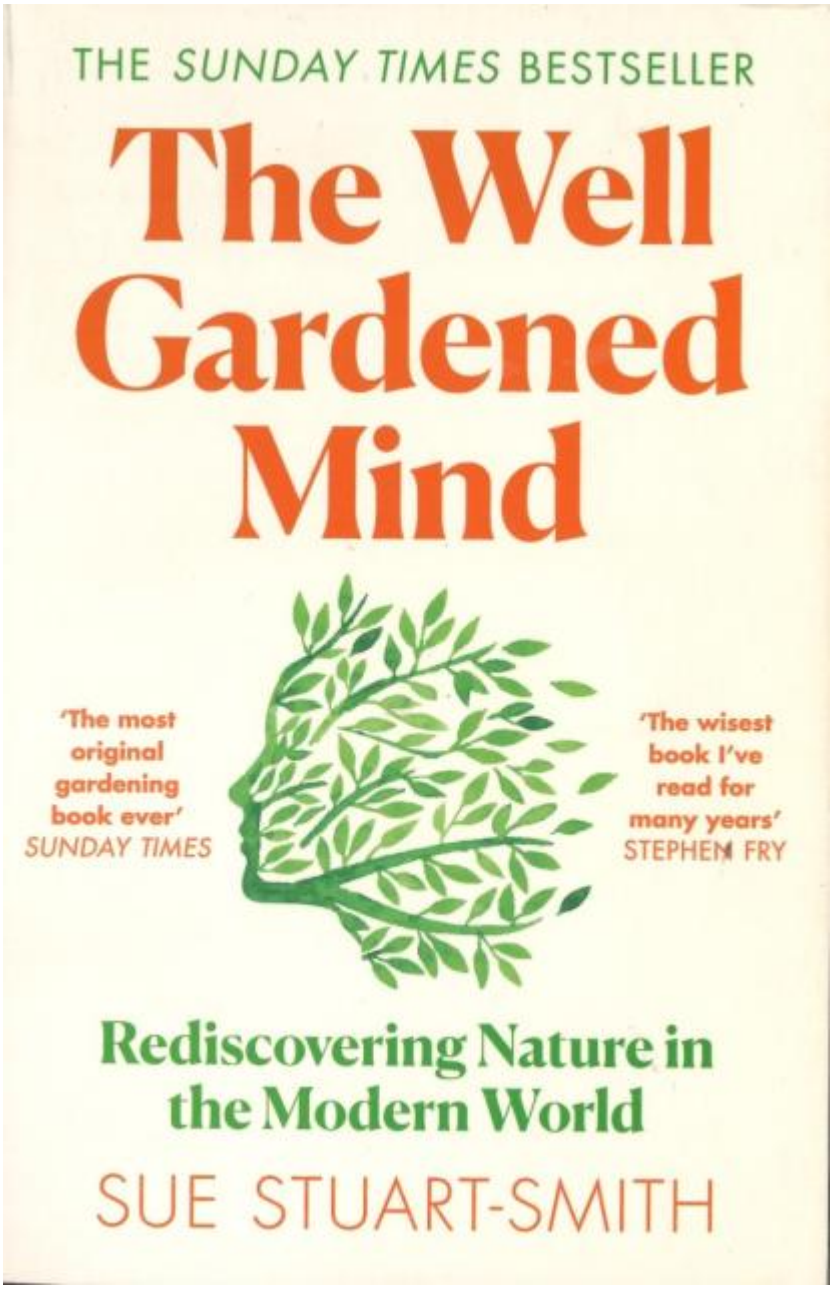
Introduction

There has been a growing consciousness about mental health in the twenty-first century, heightened during the COVID-19 pandemic, which upended the daily lives of people all over the world, preventing them from leaving their homes, socializing, and enjoying outdoor activities. Reading L.M. Montgomery's novels during the quarantines and subsequent lockdowns helped many to cope with and navigate a world inundated with a sense of isolation and loss. As an example, in March 2020, after the COVID-19 lockdown in Ontario, Canada, and many other places in the world, Montgomery scholars Andrea McKenzie and Benjamin Lefebvre launched the "*Rilla of Ingleside* Readathon" on Facebook, beginning with close readings of the novel that generated discussions bringing together lovers of Montgomery's works and fostering a sense of togetherness. In June 2022, when McKenzie and Lefebvre received the L.M. Montgomery Institute's Rev. Dr. Francis W.P. Bolger Award, presented for outstanding appreciation of Montgomery and her works, the Institute's chair, Philip Smith, praised their project for the sense of community it created: "*Rilla* was the perfect read for people hunkered at home, watching world events unfold through the news while seeking out entertainments that would distract them from it. The group flourished immediately. And the group grew. Now boasting nearly 1000 *active* members … [t]he LMM Readathon has united readers from afar to learn from and imagine Montgomery's Island anew." Although the Readathon was particularly valuable during the pandemic, a time of "separation, loss, fear, and loneliness," McKenzie and Lefebvre were deserving of the award, Smith said, because their initiation and curation of the project captured how Montgomery, "as she has in times of stress and of tragedy over the decades, ... served for some during this pandemic as a refuge, an inspiration, an invitation to community."[2]

The *Rilla* Readathon activities would have surely pleased Montgomery, who suffered with her own struggles of what she refers to as "feeling blue," especially during times of isolation and loneliness. A relevant example of this is recorded in her journal entry of 10 October 1900: "It is a horrible thing to get heart-breakingly, despairingly lonely! … like all other emotions, when loneliness does come to me it takes possession of me body and soul, and wrings me in its bleak pain until all strength and courage goes out of me. Tonight I am lonely—lonely!" She goes on to talk of the "heavy, ceaseless autumn rain," which presumably would have curtailed outdoor activities, and having nothing to read to lift her "blue" mood.[3] Montgomery well knew how loneliness can negatively affect one's mental health and creative energy. In their introduction to the third volume of the *Selected Journals*, covering the years 1921 to 1929, Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston remark, "Mental illness

constitutes one of Montgomery's recurring themes of this period" in both her fiction and life-writing.[4] On 18 August 1921, Montgomery writes of "a constant ache of loneliness in my being" but two days later records writing the first chapter of *Emily of New Moon* and planning some "good experiences" for her new heroine.[5]

The *Emily* trilogy depicts both children and adults struggling with isolation and loneliness, often the consequence of loss: Aunt Elizabeth suffers the painful memories of her late, overbearing father; Dr. Burnley neglects his daughter, Ilse, becoming a woman-hater after his wife's mysterious disappearance and presumed death; Emily's close friends, Ilse, Teddy, and Perry, have all lost one or both parents; Cousin Jimmy missed the opportunity to develop normally as a result of a childhood accident; and Emily, who lost her mother at an early age, is completely orphaned as the novel opens with the death of her father. Over the course of the trilogy, the interaction of these characters reduces their sense of isolation, and, as Waterston argues, the powerless child Emily gradually discovers that she has various abilities and strengths within.[6] In the process of encouraging and supporting Emily and being encouraged in turn by her, Cousin Jimmy also manifests his own power.



The coping mechanisms that Emily and Cousin Jimmy develop to deal with their problems can be viewed through the psychological concept of resilience. In *The Resilience Factor,* researchers and resilience coaches Karen Reivich and Andrew Shatté define resilience as "the ability to persevere and adapt when things go awry," and they identify "optimism," "self-efficacy," and "reaching out" among the "seven abilities" underlying resilience.[7] One activity that has been shown to build these abilities is gardening: the hope that a little seed will survive winter and early spring to thrive later (optimism); the confidence to plant and trust that one can tend the growing plant adequately (self-efficacy); and the connection with others and the earth for support (reaching out). Psychiatrist and psychotherapist Sue Stuart-Smith

examines the value of garden therapy in *The Well-Gardened Mind: The Restorative Power of Nature,* explaining that gardening can build resilience by boosting mood and self-esteem and helping alleviate depression and anxiety.[8] Applying these ideas, this paper focuses on two characters who develop or have developed resilience through gardening: Emily Byrd Starr, a child who grows into adulthood; and Cousin Jimmy, an adult who remains childlike.

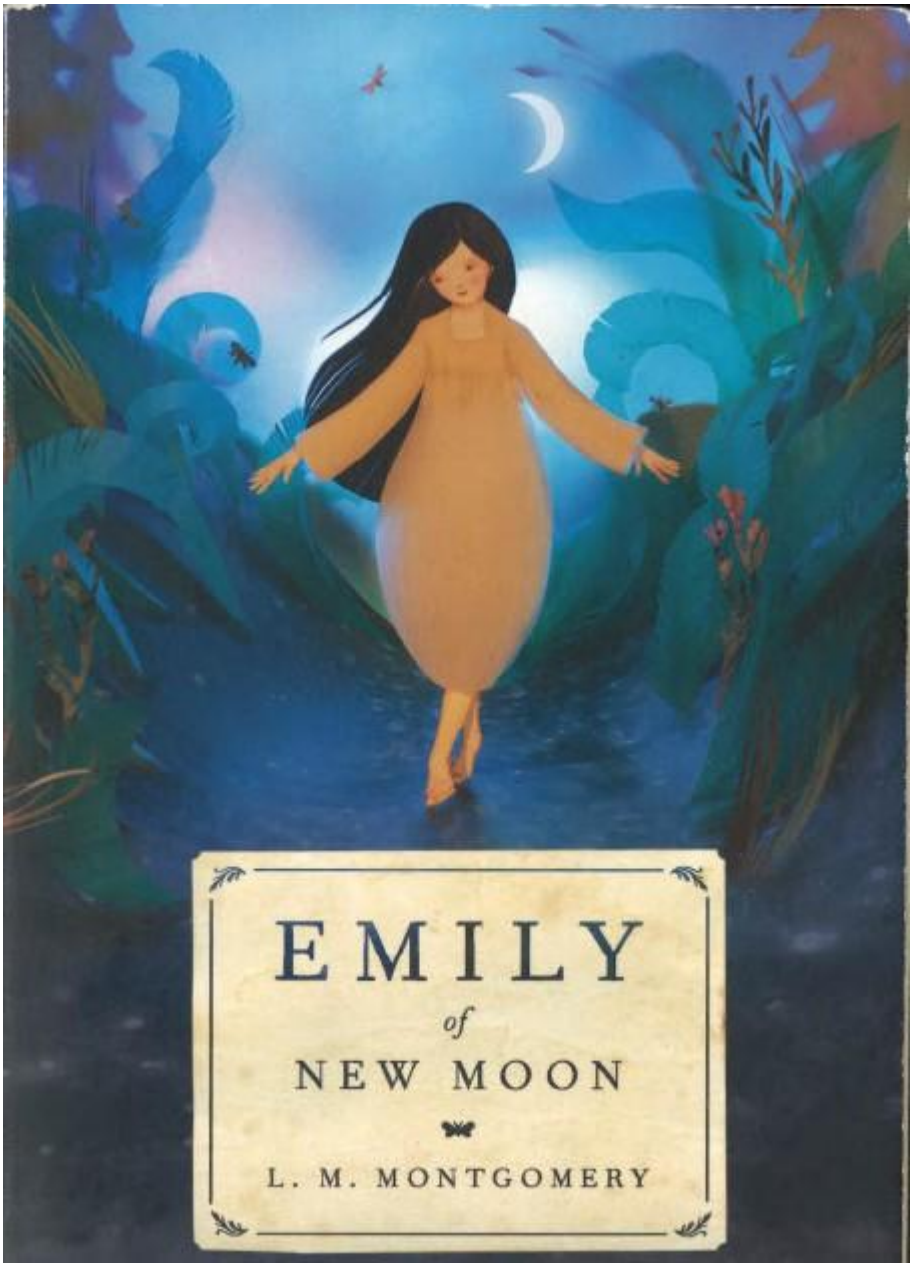
In *The Fragrance of Sweet-Grass*, Elizabeth Epperly examines how Montgomery's autobiographical essay, later published as *The Alpine Path*, and the transcription of her old girlhood journals affected her writing of *Emily of New Moon.*[9] Montgomery

indicated that the character of Emily reflected her younger days "*in some respects*" and that "'Emily's inner life was [her] own."[10] She also wrote that Cousin Jimmy was modelled on a maternal relative, Great-Uncle Jimmie Macneill, who composed most of his poems "as he sat boiling potatoes for the pigs in winter time! … He was a failure as a farmer but had he been an educated man he might have 'made his mark' in the world—if his eccentricities had not stood in his way."[11] Focusing on the inner worlds of Emily and Cousin Jimmy and their drive to create through words, Montgomery portrays two artists who face the difficulty of not being understood by the people around them but who become resilient by cultivating both their gardens and their creative potentials. Like these characters, Montgomery herself enjoyed gardening throughout her life, writing in a letter to her lifelong pen-friend Ephraim Weber in 1936, "I have spent my life making gardens and leaving them behind," a kind of creative legacy.[12] As Cecily Devereux says, it is noteworthy that Montgomery bequeathed a photo of the Macneill orchard taken in 1900 to her eldest son, Chester, in 1941, one year before her death in 1942. The ninth entry of her will's codicil includes the following note and instruction: "My flower garden was beyond the open space. See Journal." Although Devereux observes that the orchard was the model of the King orchard in Montgomery's *The Story Girl,* we can see the close relationship between Montgomery's orchard and the flower garden and between her writing and own personal experiences.[13]

Emily's Tribulations

Early in *Emily of New Moon*, Emily experiences two losses, both of which are closely connected with writing. First is the loss of her father. When, just before his death, Emily's father consoles her with the hope that she will be reunited with him and her mother in heaven, Emily understands that "he would slip into that world of which the flash had given her glimpses. He would be there in its beauty." Emily believes her father will become part of the beauty that inspires her creativity, her urge to write, but just after his death, her grief is so intense that any attempt to find comfort through writing is futile. She discovers instead an inner strength by hiding her deep grief when first meeting with her Murray relatives. Aunt Ruth may think that Emily is "a child … absolutely devoid of all natural feeling," but the narrator ascribes Emily's inherent powers to "certain things [she "had inherited"] from her fine old ancestors—the power to fight—to suffer, … to endure."[14] This inherent resiliency will be nurtured and will ultimately transform Waterston's "powerless child" into a strong young woman with a fierce will to survive.

Emily experiences the second loss soon after she becomes an orphan: the loss of the yellow notebook in which she had written her private thoughts. When she impulsively burns the notebook to prevent Aunt Elizabeth from reading it, she feels “as if she had lost something incalculably precious” because she would never be able to read or write those lines again or experience the memories they would provoke. Emily loses not only the father who understood and respected her deep desire to be a writer but also the means of coping with his loss. Although she has lost the one person who affirmed her importance, she demonstrates the potential for resilience, especially through optimism and the seeds of self-efficacy, when she continues to write and to resist diminishment with her avowal “I am important to myself.”15 However, she has yet to learn the importance of reaching out.



Cousin Jimmy’s Tribulations

In the first description of Cousin Jimmy, his “large, brown eyes” are depicted as “kind and frank as a child’s,” although he would have been in his fifties when eleven-year-old Emily first meets him. Ellen Greene tells Emily that Jimmy is “a bit simple—some accident or other when he was a youngster, I’ve heard. It addled his head, kind of.” Emily, however, regards him as “nice,” thinking that “whatever part of him was missing it wasn’t his heart.” Jimmy himself speculates that, after his accident, “[f]olks say I’ve never been quite right since—but they only say that because I’m a poet, and because nothing ever worries me. Poets are so scarce in

Blair Water folks don't understand them, and most people worry so much, they think you're not right if you don't worry."[16] An optimist, Jimmy does not dwell upon what he has lost but embraces what is different about him.

Jimmy accepts the physical and psychological injuries he sustained when he and Elizabeth were children and she accidentally pushed him into the New Moon well. His "queer spells of looking and talking" frighten Emily on several occasions and "an eerie, indefinable something" in his voice gives Emily "a sudden crinkly feeling in her spine." These are the reasons others conclude that he is "a failure and a mental weakling."[17] His symptoms are part of his continuing trauma, those "challenging emotional consequences that living through a distressing event can have for an individual,"[18] a condition that he also recognizes in Elizabeth's experience of the accident, which he cannot find words to describe.[19] Jimmy is aware that he has "a loss of something," as Emily Dickinson writes in the poem in this paper's epigraph. What exactly Cousin Jimmy has lost is ambiguous, but he is perpetually aware of the absence of something and accepts it as his state of being. Despite this, he is connected to his family and farm and is self-efficacious in aspiring to goals within his reach and capabilities. He has a good foundation for resilience, and despite being perceived as childlike, he becomes a mentor to Emily, especially in sharing his love of gardens and gardening with her.

The Importance of Gardens in Montgomery's Fiction

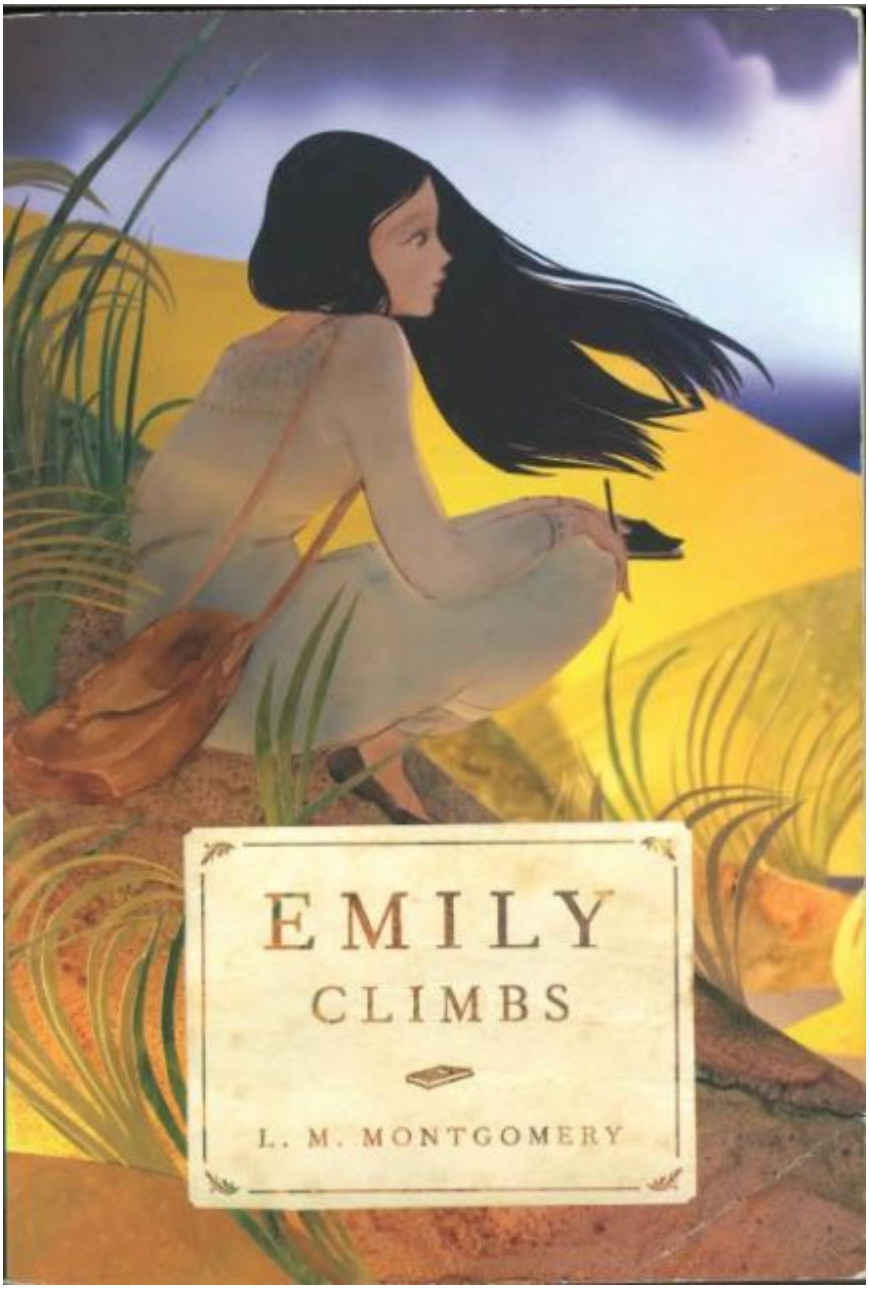
Margaret Doody appropriately observes that "[a]ll of Montgomery's writing about trees, plants, and flowers, whether in her published fiction or journals, maintains a balance between art and nature, the wild and the civilized. … We do not focus on [the Barry] garden as the work of Mrs. Barry or of anyone else; it is a magical garden, a garden of poetry, a garden of the heart."[20] The Barry garden reflects Montgomery's idea of an ideal, "old-timey" garden as is suggested by her journal entry for 28 August 1901:

For one thing, it *must* be secluded and shut away from the world—a "garden enclosed"—preferably by willows—or apple trees—or firs. It must have some trim walks bordered by clam-shells, or edged with "ribbon grass," and there must be in it the flowers that belong to old-fashioned gardens and are seldom found in the catalogues of to-day—perennials planted there by grandmotherly hands when the century was young. … all growing in orderly confusion.[21]

For Montgomery, therefore, a garden should be a safe, nostalgic, natural space.

Similarly, Montgomery writes in her 1901 short story “A Garden of Old Delights” of a grandchild’s recollection of her grandmother’s garden: “What wonder that wise old Eden story placed the beginning of life in a garden? A garden fitly belongs to the youth of the world and the youth of the race, for it never grows old. … It is foolishness to speak as we do of ‘old’ gardens: gardens are perennially young, the haunt of flowers and children.”22 In his introduction to this story, Lefebvre writes, “It consists of descriptions of an old garden told by an adult narrator through the lens of memory and contains several family legends that would be retold by Sara Stanley—as well as one that Montgomery saved for *Emily of New Moon* (1923).”23 The New Moon garden has a legend of its own, called “the lost diamond,” in which a wealthy Murray forebear lost the jewel of her ring somewhere in the garden, which piques the interest of Jimmy and Emily who want to find it.24

The beautifully depicted gardens in Montgomery’s works, including those of New Moon, are spaces that prompt the characters to cultivate themselves, which, as Stuart-Smith argues, is something that all gardens have the potential to do. Although Montgomery’s idea of an ideal garden is enclosed, it should not be restrictive if it is to have healing power. Stuart-Smith observes, “[g]ardens that have vistas as well as protected spaces within them satisfy our need for prospect and refuge. Much as physical or emotional holding can be protective and open at the same time, so a garden can offer a feeling of safe enclosure without entrapment.” She later states that “[t]he first step of any trauma treatment is … ‘regaining a sense of safety’” and that “in horticultural therapy, the safe enclosure of the garden is a therapeutic tool in its own right.”25 The New Moon garden offers just such “prospect and refuge” for Cousin Jimmy and Emily.



The Importance of the Garden for Cousin Jimmy and Emily

When Emily arrives at the New Moon farmhouse, she is immediately captivated by the old building and its surroundings, especially the beautiful garden “well worthy Cousin Jimmy's pride,” for he has tended it for years. It is a garden protected by “a high hedge of clipped spruce” interspersed with “tall lombardies” and enclosed on the north side “by a thick grove of spruce”; it seems, therefore, a place “no frost could wither or rough wind blow.” Jimmy’s trimming and pruning have transformed what would have been originally wild land into a garden that is the epitome of a haven, with “a long row of peonies,” whose “great red blossoms” are “splendid”

against the “darkness” of the spruce grove. It also has some garden ornaments such as “a stone bench,” “a sundial,” “a summer house,” and “a big front porch,” additions made by the Murray ancestors.26 Emily’s comment that the garden is “fit for a queen” so pleases Cousin Jimmy that he welcomes her with the invitation to “make [her]self at home in this garden.” Emily names the garden’s old summer house “Emily’s Bower” and begins to read and write there. Unlike the cold parlour and the bedroom she shares with Aunt Elizabeth, the New Moon garden is a space Emily feels is her own. Here both she and Cousin Jimmy share the privacy of a beautiful place that kindles their creativity. As Doody says, “[Montgomery’s] ideal garden includes an orchard of fruit-bearing trees in the background, with bloom that can be as important as flowers,”27 and New Moon farm is such a place: a garden with flowers, vegetables, and two orchards.

Cousin Jimmy manages the New Moon garden and its old and new orchards as he pleases, growing “plants and shrubs that would winter nowhere else in P.E. Island.” Within these enclosed spaces, he recites his poetry whenever he is moved to do so. Although readers are never granted an audience at his recitations, and thus cannot know the content of his poetry, it is in the old orchard that he is seen reciting his works while boiling the pigs’ potatoes in October. He finds a “fit audience though few” in Emily but never shares his verse with any others, including Emily’s friends, Teddy, Ilse, or Perry. This is his own private, solemn time:

He was an odd, ridiculous figure enough, bent and wrinkled and unkempt, gesticulating awkwardly as he recited. But it was his hour; he was no longer “simple Jimmy Murray” but a prince in his own realm. For a little while he was strong and young and splendid and beautiful, accredited master of song to a listening, enraptured world. None of his prosperous, sensible Blair Water neighbours ever lived through such an hour. He would not have exchanged places with one of them.28

As this passage establishes, composing poems and reciting them to Emily strengthens Jimmy’s resilience, fostering in him a sense of self-confidence, which overrides his knowing that others think he is mentally or socially deficient.

Sharing time in the garden and the orchards with Cousin Jimmy motivates Emily to write her own poetry and descriptive prose passages. She experiences the “flash” come “almost every evening over something or other.” The garden becomes for her, as she says of Lofty John’s bush, “one of the places where dreams grow,” a place of growing things, that stimulates her imagination. Even during the winter, Emily is

inspired to write about its beauty, and she wonders “what all the little roots and seeds are thinking of down under the snow.” When, in her second year at New Moon, she is allowed to use her late mother’s room, which is called the “lookout,” she is delighted to be able to see “all over the garden from it and into Lofty John’s bush,” as she reports in a letter to her late father. The titles of some of her works attest to the garden’s influence on her, such as “Lines Written on a Sundial in our Garden” and “The Garden of New Moon.” As her mentor and schoolteacher Mr. Carpenter recognizes, Emily responds to the “ghosts” that the garden conjures.29

In Emily’s high-school days depicted in *Emily Climbs,* the New Moon garden is again highlighted when seventeen-year-old Emily achieves success with the publication of her essay “The Woman Who Spanked the King” and is offered a chance to go to New York. Walking in her garden, she wonders if she will be able to experience the “flash” in New York and finally concludes:

How beautiful was this old garden which Cousin Jimmy loved! How beautiful was old New Moon farm! Its beauty had a subtly romantic quality all its own. … How could she leave this old house that had sheltered and loved her…? All at once she knew she could not leave them—she knew she had never really wanted to leave them. …

“I belong to New Moon—I stay among my own people,” she said.30

In this moment, Emily links the garden, the farm, the house, and her family history to the “flash” that inspires her to write in New Moon. Although the opportunity to go to New York offers her a chance of “reaching out” to others, she now truly understands the necessity of rooting herself among her clan and her precious surroundings. She recognizes that her identity is inextricably linked to the New Moon garden and that she must nurture her connection to it in order to sustain her creativity.

The centrality of the garden to Emily’s well-being and success is further suggested in the opening chapter of *Emily’s Quest*, where seventeen-year-old Emily is described while walking in the garden. The autumnal maritime garden of New Moon is depicted as “a place of peace”: “An enchanted pleasaunce, full of rich, sensuous colours and wonderful spiritual shadows. Scents of pine and rose were in it; boom of bees, threnody of wind, murmurs of the blue Atlantic gulf; and always the soft sighing of the firs in Lofty John Sullivan’s ‘bush’ to the north of it. Emily loved every flower and shadow and sound in it, every beautiful old tree in and around it.” In this final book

of the trilogy, the New Moon garden is where Emily and her suitors enjoy conversations, where she faces loneliness as all her close friends leave Prince Edward Island, and where she consoles herself with moonlit walks. When Teddy comes home after two years of studying abroad in Paris (narrowly saved from sailing on the doomed ship *Flavian* thanks to Emily's second sight), he visits Emily in her garden and says, "Nothing seems changed here. Time has stood still in this Garden of Eden."[31] His metaphor emphasizes the idyllic nature of the sensuous, joy-filled New Moon garden for Emily. The garden has remained a safe place in which Emily is able to nurture her resilience until the misunderstanding between herself and Teddy is resolved at the end of the trilogy. It is, however, a garden that Emily will need to leave if she is to move forward.

Gardening for Cousin Jimmy and Emily

While the simple act of being in an Edenic garden can have healing potential and inspire creativity, working in them, as Stuart-Smith also argues, can "be understood as a form of space-time medicine. Working outdoors helps expand our sense of mental space and the growth cycles of plants can alter the relationship we have with time."[32] It is not just a matter of conflating past and present, as the previously quoted description of a "strong and young and splendid and beautiful" princely Jimmy in a fairy-tale garden suggests—and certainly not of getting caught in an unchanging garden—but rather of embracing the change that is inherent in the life cycles. In other Montgomery works such as *Anne of Green Gables* and *Anne of Avonlea*, children are encouraged to tend plants as a part of their home education, and one lesson they learn is the patience and trust needed to plant something today that will grow and flourish in the future. Emily is also allowed to plant her own flowerbed the second May that she lives at New Moon farm.[33] She is fortunate to have Cousin Jimmy as her teacher, and with his mentoring while she helps him, she learns intricate details about the plants, such as the thinning out of seedlings (even though the task makes her feel that she and Cousin Jimmy are "Baby-killers" of tiny maple-trees!).[34] For the first time, Cousin Jimmy is given an opportunity to impart his knowledge to another person, and, by showing Emily how to take care of plants, he is able to realize his own self-efficacy. Working outdoors together, they cultivate their creative endeavours.

In *Emily Climbs*, Emily's literary success is connected with gardening when her poem "Owl's Laughter" is accepted for publication in a magazine named *Garden and*

Woodland, after multiple rejections by other publishers, and she is given two dollars' worth of seeds or plants in place of cash. Her optimism has encouraged her to steadfastly continue submitting her work to various magazines, while her self-efficacy rooted in her confidence in her work has encouraged her to move further up "the Alpine Path," Montgomery's well-known metaphor for climbing toward the summit of one's ambition, where she can be herself and find success in her work; and, finally, she demonstrates "reaching out" in her desire to share her work with an audience by being published. She is satisfied with the "seedy" compensation and celebrates by imagining "what fun she and Cousin Jimmy would have selecting the seeds! She could see in imagination that beautiful flower-bed next summer in the New Moon garden—a glory of crimson and purple and blue and gold." They plan to make a long, narrow bed full of asters, and Emily imagines that she "shall look at its September loveliness and think, *'This* came out of my head!'"[35] She has gained the confidence that present imaginings will lead to future fruitions. Because of the joy of gardening, Emily's confidence in her writing ability is strengthened, and she is able to share her delight in a way that will also reward Cousin Jimmy.

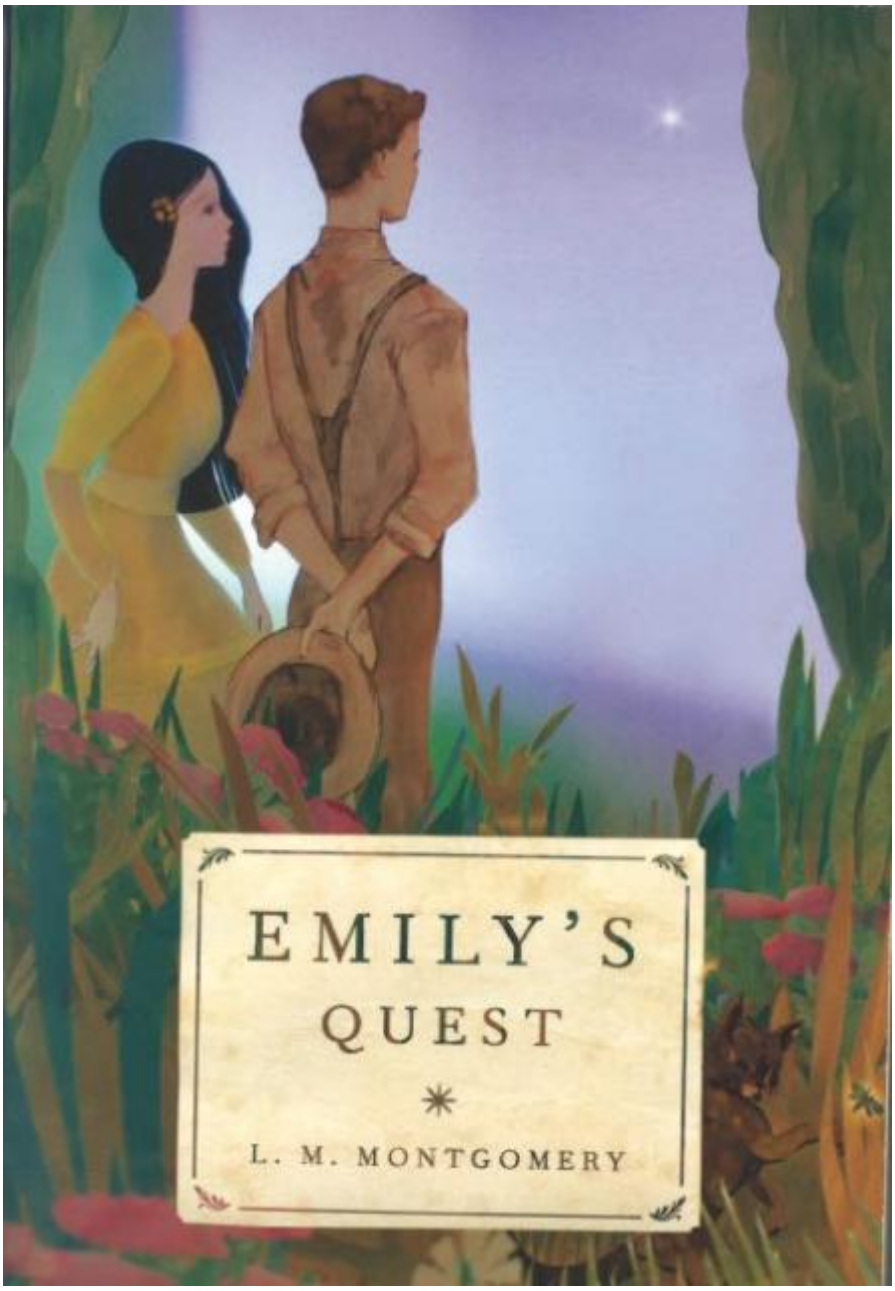
Reciprocity between Emily and Cousin Jimmy

Emily's love of the New Moon garden and of Cousin Jimmy saves the trees in the bush that Lofty John threatens to cut down. The big, thick growth of spruce and hardwood protects New Moon against the north wind and sea storms. Because of the renowned Murray pride, none of the New Moon adults (Aunt Elizabeth, Aunt Laura, or Cousin Jimmy) takes action to prevent the threat to the trees, but twelve-year-old Emily casts aside her own Murray pride and reaches out for help from the Catholic priest, Father Cassidy. Her ardent petition to Father Cassidy leads to the priest's success in stopping Lofty John's revenge. Emily has within her the optimism and self-efficacy to mend the rift between the Murrays and Lofty John, as she has the will to rebuild a broken relationship with their neighbour. Her action of reaching out first to the priest and then to Lofty John leads to a peaceful resolution, and the trees in the bush are granted a reprieve, for which Cousin Jimmy thanks her: "It would have spoiled the garden and broken my heart."[36] Later, in *Emily's Quest*, a twenty-three-year-old Emily ultimately buys Lofty John's bush with the "proceeds of [her] latest serial":

And it is mine—mine—mine. All the lovely things in it are mine—its moonlit vistas—the grace of its one big elm against the starlight—its shadowy little dells—its

June-bells and ferns—its crystalline spring—its wind music sweeter than an old Cremona. No one can ever cut it down or desecrate it in any way.37

With her faithful love for the beauty of nature, Emily protects not only Lofty John's bush but Cousin Jimmy's garden as well.



The Difference between Cousin Jimmy and Emily

While Cousin Jimmy and Emily both have vivid imaginations and strong desires to express them, Jimmy is content to recite his poetry only to himself and Emily. He

comes to use his power of reaching out mainly by helping Emily. For instance, in *Emily of New Moon*, he buys “a big thick blank book” for Emily as her twelfth-birthday present and then continues giving notebooks to her as his regular gifts; Emily calls them her “Jimmy-books” in gratitude to him. Later, in *Emily’s Quest,* it is Cousin Jimmy who secretly sends Emily’s repeatedly rejected novel, *The Moral of Rose*, to a famous American publisher.38 Unlike Cousin Jimmy, who is content to keep his poetry to himself, Emily wants her writing to have a far wider impact. To begin with, her writing is solely therapeutic, and she refers to it as “writing herself out.” For example, through writing about the unkind treatment she received from her relatives on first meeting them, “pain and humiliation had passed away,” and she records feeling “tired and rather happy” as well as admitting to the “fun” of finding the best words to describe them.39 Writing is her way forward, and by writing, she fosters resilience in herself.

Emily becomes more conscious of becoming a published writer and sharing her work with others in *Emily’s Quest*. After a long period of being unable to write and breaking off her engagement to Dean Priest, who treats her writing as a pastime rather than a career, she returns to her journaling to put down her experiences and feelings as she used to do, when suddenly the flash returns and she is able to write again. In a diary entry dated 15 May, she writes: “the work for which we are fitted—which we feel we are sent into the world to do—what a blessing it is and what fulness of joy it holds. I felt this to-day as the old fever burned in my finger-tips and my pen once more seemed a friend,” and she finally prays, “Oh, God, as long as I live give me ‘leave to work.’... Leave and courage.”40 She again recognizes writing as her vocation and *raison d’être*.

Later in *Emily’s Quest*, Emily entertains a bedridden Aunt Elizabeth, by writing a book—a new chapter every day—and reading it to her. Although Aunt Elizabeth has never respected Emily’s calling as a writer, she comments that the folks in the story seemed “real” to her. Emily’s desire to reach out to an audience results in her aunt’s offering her frank opinion, showing that Emily is clearly able to overcome the hurdle of connecting with readers who are difficult to please, which foreshadows the mixed criticism that this story receives when it is published as *The Moral of the Rose*. It is Emily’s “ambition,” to be a weaver of words, that takes her through the solitude and extreme loneliness she undergoes after Ilse jilts Teddy and marries Perry and all her friends seem to have moved on with their lives and deserted her.41

Montgomery's and Emily's "Secret Gardens"

In 1927, four months after revising *Emily's Quest* and sending it to the typist, Montgomery wrote about her own source of resilience: "I have always had my own ideal world of dream and fancy to roam in—my 'secret garden' where my soul dwells and quenches its thirst at unknown, enchanted springs while my hands are painting floors."42 The garden here is a metaphor for a place in which she recharges her power of resilience, a safe haven in both the physical and imaginary worlds. Emily, who reflects Montgomery with her inner world, also has two gardens: the New Moon garden and the "secret garden" within her that sustains her spirit. While Emily never uses the phrase "secret garden" in the trilogy, she needs not only the New Moon garden but also an inner garden in which she can freely converse with imaginary beings on her moonlit walks. In a diary entry dated 22 February, Emily writes that the night is conducive to "dream[ing] happy dreams of gardens and songs and companionship," but, instead of sleeping, she slips away for "a solitary walk through that fairy world of glamour" for "a tryst with my friend of old days, the Wind Woman. And every breath was a lyric and every thought an ecstasy and I've come back with a soul washed white and clean in the great crystal bath of the night."43 In essence, Emily visits her inner "secret garden" and returns home with a replenished reserve of resiliency, as Montgomery herself would do.

Conclusion

Sue Stuart-Smith writes, "Cultivation works both ways; it is inward as well as outward and tending a garden can become an attitude towards life."44 This is true for Emily and Cousin Jimmy. Their time spent in the New Moon garden, both enjoying the space and actively gardening, stimulates their creativity and promotes their mental well-being. They become close largely because both are creators with active imaginations that help them nurture resilient powers within themselves, recognizing that creativity and creation are the means of maintaining their mental balance. Their inward and outward powers of "optimism," "self-efficacy," and "reaching out" strengthen their mental health. Unlike Cousin Jimmy, however, Emily exhibits a stronger confidence and determination to reach out by having her works published. As a published writer, she continues to strive to express herself, wrestling with words and confronting feelings of isolation. For her, the garden and gardening as therapy are indispensable to her life as a writer.45 Montgomery's works, especially the *Emily* trilogy, illumine a path to the recovery of mental well-being and the

fostering of resilient powers in oneself.

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Banner Image: View of Alma MacNeill's home (her garden), ca.1897, Cavendish, PEI. Digital image courtesy of Archival and Special Collections, University of Guelph. L.M. Montgomery Collection, XZ1 MS A097012.

- 1 Dickinson, *Poems*. The quotation is the first stanza of a sixteen-line, four-stanza poem.
- 2 Quoted in "Awards," L.M. Montgomery Institute. One of the Readathon activities was published in the *Journal of L.M. Montgomery Studies*, showing how this endeavour helped some of the Readathon members through their mental hardships during this time of separation and loneliness. See Andrea McKenzie, "Reading *Rilla* through COVID-19." *Journal of L.M. Montgomery Studies*, 25 April 2021. https://doi.org/10.32393/jlmms/2021.0010.Mackenzie. According to the group's history, the "Rilla of Ingleside Readathon" was created on 23 March 2020, and it was renamed the "L.M. Montgomery Readathon" on 20 August 2020. According to the Readathon Facebook page, the final book scheduled to be read by the group is *Anne of Windy Poplars* (also published as *Anne of Windy Willows*) in 2025.
- 3 Montgomery, *CJ* 1 (10 Oct. 1900): 465.
- 4 Rubio and Waterston, "Introduction" xi. See also Rubio, *Lucy Maud Montgomery* 210–19.
- 5 Montgomery, *CJ* 4 (18 Aug. 1921, 20 Aug. 1921): 334–35.
- 6 Waterston, *Magic Island* 112–13.
- 7 Reivich and Shatté, *The Resilience Factor* 1, 33.
- 8 Stuart-Smith, *The Well-Gardened Mind* 40.
- 9 Epperly, *Fragrance* 145–46.
- 10 Montgomery, *After Green Gables* 88 (emphasis in original); *CJ* 5 (29 Aug. 1923): 178.
- 11 Montgomery, *CJ* 2 (28 Jan. 1912): 389. See also Montgomery, *AP* 15; *CJ* 2 (28 Jan. 1912): 389; *CJ* 7 (2 June 1931): 145–46; Rubio 39.

- 12 Montgomery, *After Green Gables* 227.
- 13 Devereux, "'See My Journal,'" 241–43, 254–57.
- 14 Montgomery, *ENM* 21–23, 40, 42, 13.
- 15 Montgomery, *ENM* 57, 25.
- 16 Montgomery, *ENM* 32, 26, 41, 81.
- 17 Montgomery, *ENM* 83, 120, 91, 172.
- 18 CAMH: The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.
- 19 Montgomery, *ENM* 81.
- 20 Doody, "Gardens and Plants" 437.
- 21 Montgomery, *CJ* 2 (28 Aug. 1901): 20 (emphasis in original).
- 22 Montgomery, "A Garden" 154.
- 23 Lefebvre, "An Introduction" 95.
- 24 Montgomery, *ENM* 91.
- 25 Stuart-Smith 69, 71, 72.
- 26 Montgomery, *ENM* 82–84, 119, 170.
- 27 Doody 435.
- 28 Montgomery, *ENM* 171, 76, 226, 172, 174.
- 29 Montgomery, *ENM* 173, 79, 192, 346, 199, 404.
- 30 Montgomery, *EC* 362.
- 31 Montgomery, *EQ* 4–5, 40, 149, 126.
- 32 Stuart-Smith 247.
- 33 Montgomery, *AGG* 144, *AA* 207, *ENM* 217. A good example is the contrasting outcomes of Davy's failure and Dora's success in *Anne of Avonlea*; Davy's plants fail to thrive because he checks on them too much, while Dora's measured care allows hers to flourish. See also Akamatsu, "How Gardens Bring Spiritual Growth to Anne and Emily."
- 34 Montgomery, *EQ* 121–22.
- 35 Montgomery, *EC* 152–53, 179.
- 36 Montgomery, *ENM* 225, 249.
- 37 Montgomery, *EQ* 185.
- 38 Montgomery, *ENM* 216, 81, 364, 301; *EQ* 192–94.
- 39 Montgomery, *ENM* 172, 50. The specific phrase "writing herself out" is from the title of the first chapter of *Emily Climbs*, but the therapeutic value of writing is one of the main themes throughout the first two books in the trilogy.
- 40 Montgomery, *EQ* 119–20.
- 41 Montgomery, *EQ* 169–74, 211–15, 260.
- 42 Montgomery, *CJ* 6: 91–92, 120.

- 43 Montgomery, *EQ* 183–84.
- 44 Stuart-Smith 286, 350–51, 361–62.
- 45 In her paper, “Emily Byrd Starr Meets Brené Brown,” Lesley Clement suggests the significance of the Edenic garden alluded to in the final scenes of the trilogy. Emily is now able to leave this garden and move on in her life and career while retaining her roots in New Moon and the neighbouring landscapes. The final scene describes Emily standing in the New Moon garden, listening to Teddy’s footsteps approaching, reminding us of the kinship between Emily and the garden itself. It is true that Emily’s marriage to Teddy will lead to her departure from the New Moon garden, as she cannot inherit New Moon farm; however, because she owns the bush guarding the New Moon garden and will stay at the neighbouring Disappointed House during summers, as Dean gave it to Emily and Teddy as a wedding gift, Emily will continue her connection with New Moon garden and its Edenic allure.

Article Info

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