

# Arranging the Self: Literary and Archival Perspectives on Writers' Archives\*



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**RÉSUMÉ** Ce texte rend compte d'un petit projet de recherche exploratoire que les auteures ont mené en examinant les fonds d'archives de trois écrivaines canadiennes bien connues – L. M. Montgomery, Marian Engel et Alice Munro – afin de déterminer s'il est possible de connaître les écrivaines, leurs personnalités et leurs intentions, à partir de leurs archives, et si oui, dans quelle mesure. Les auteures ont examiné les archives des trois écrivaines en se servant de deux cadres d'interprétation : les principes archivistiques du classement et les textes théoriques portant sur le récit de vie. Les auteures ont conclu que la possibilité qu'un fonds d'archives d'écrivain révèle la personnalité et l'intention de l'auteur est inévitablement contrainte à la fois par les efforts mêmes de l'écrivain pour cacher ou réviser sa vie et par l'intervention de d'autres personnes qui peuvent imposer leur propre intention sur le fonds d'archives.

**ABSTRACT** This article reports on a small exploratory research project undertaken by the authors on the archives of three well-known Canadian writers – L.M. Montgomery, Marian Engel, and Alice Munro – for the purpose of assessing whether and to what extent we can know writers – their character and intentions – through their archives. The three writers' archives were examined through two interpretive frameworks: the archival principles of arrangement and the literature on life writing. The authors found that the capacity of a writer's archive to reveal character and intention, inevitably, is constrained by the writer's own efforts to conceal and edit the self, and by the imposition of intentions of persons other than the writer on the archive.

\* This article is a revised version of a paper given at a conference entitled *Archive Fervour/ Archive Further: Literature, Archives, and Literary Archives*, held on 9–11 July 2008 at the University of Wales at Aberystwyth.

## Introduction

Reflecting on our fascination with literary archives, Stephen Enniss observes that, “the one person we most want to find in the archive is ... the one person we can be sure we will not find, but look we must for some transubstantiation of pen and paper that may yet fill that unfillable space.”<sup>1</sup> The belief in the possibility, however faint, of achieving that transubstantiation is a compelling incitement for the preservation and use of a writer’s archives. This article reports on a small exploratory research project undertaken by the authors on the archives of three well-known Canadian writers for the purpose of gaining some understanding of whether and how we can know a writer through her archives.<sup>2</sup> To accomplish that purpose, the authors investigated the ways in which the archive of a writer is shaped, both by the writer herself, and by others who are involved in its transmission and long-term care.

The three groups of records chosen for study were the L.M. Montgomery Collection, located at the University of Guelph, the Marian Engel Fonds, located at McMaster University, and the Alice Munro Fonds, located at the University of Calgary. L.M. Montgomery is best known as the author of *Anne of Green Gables*, and both the author and her literary creation have achieved the status of Canadian icons. Perhaps equally well-known, Alice Munro is an international, award-winning author – primarily of short stories – and has been called Canada’s Chekhov. Although not as well-known internationally as Montgomery and Munro, Marian Engel is critically acclaimed within Canada as the Governor General’s award-winning writer of innovative novels, short fiction, and non-fiction. The records of these writers were chosen because they each evoke a number of questions about the intentions of their creators, and the nature of their representation through archival arrangement and description. In addition, in each case there exists a significant body of literature drawing on the documents contained in the archives and contributing to an understanding of the representational functions fulfilled by these archives.<sup>3</sup> The investigators looked specifically at the shaping of the three

- 1 Stephen Enniss, “In the Author’s Hand: Artifacts of Origin and Twentieth-Century Reading Practice,” *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* 2 (2001), p. 115.
- 2 The Hampton Research Fund Committee at the University of British Columbia funded the research through the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Grant, Large Grants Program.
- 3 Although each of the writers selected for study is female, no specific effort was made to select women writers or to construct arguments within a feminist framework. Much of the literature on life writing relates to diary- and letter-writing, and focuses on the personal writing of women; since one of our criteria for selection was that there be a secondary literature for us to consult, this fact influenced our choice of writers. It is our belief that the conclusions reached in this paper apply also to the archives of male writers, but only

writers' archives through two interpretive frameworks: archival principles and the literature on life writing.

### Archival Principles

The principles that guide the arrangement and description of records held in archival institutions are respect des fonds, which dictates that the records of a person, family, or corporate body be kept together and not intermingled with the records of other creators, and respect for original order, which dictates that records be preserved in the order given to them by the entity that created them. These two principles are considered by many to constitute the external and internal dimensions of the principle of provenance. Underlying the principles is the assumption that records are grouped together as part of the activities of the person or administration that produced and received them and, as such, represent an indivisible whole (that whole is typically referred to as a fonds); therefore, they should remain together and in the order they were given by the creator before the records were transferred to the archives.<sup>4</sup>

The principles of arrangement are posited on the presumption of an affinity between records and their creator, in which the arrangement of the records acts as a kind of mirror of the entity that produced them. Classical theorists such as Giorgio Cencetti insisted that, "the original order given to the archive by its creator, was the manifestation ... and in some way the very 'essence' of the records creator."<sup>5</sup> The principles also presume the existence of an affinity between abstract wholes and material parts; the concept of fonds communicates a sense of wholeness to something that physically exists only in fragments. Records preserved in archival institutions function as a kind of synecdoche in which the part (the physical remains) stands in for the whole. The archival description of those records is a representation of both the fonds' abstract and material dimensions. The arrangement and description of a fonds may be seen, then, as an effort to recover and make present again an absent referent, i.e., the creator. The centrality of the absent referent

further research will confirm this assumption. For literature related to the archives and/or to the writings contained in the archives of the three authors, see, for example, Irene Gammel, ed., *The Intimate Life of L.M. Montgomery* (Toronto, 2005); JoAnn McCaig, *Reading In: Alice Munro's Archive* (Waterloo, 2002); Afra Kavanagh, "Ambivalence and Intertextuality in Marian Engel's *The Glassy Sea*: What the Archives Reveal," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 40 (Spring 2006), pp. 79–95; Christl Verduyn, *Lifelines: Marian Engel's Writings* (Montreal and Kingston, 1995); Christl Verduyn, ed., *Marian Engel's Notebooks: "Ah, mon cahier, écoute..."* (Waterloo, 1999).

- 4 Of course, as any archivist who works with personal archives can attest, this assumption is often erroneous; such records may have no discernible order.
- 5 Maurizio Savoia and Stefano Vitali, "Authority Control for Creators in Italy," *Journal of Archival Organization*, vol. 5, nos. 1–2 (2007), p. 123.

is evident in the requirement that archivists undo any order(s) imposed on a creator's records by subsequent custodians, and in the importance archivists attach to the biographical sketch or administrative history of a creator in the preparation of an archival description.

In the specific case of writers' archives, the effort to recover and make present the writer may be linked historically to a Romantic ideology concerning the personal and psychological nature of artistic creation. A basic conception of that ideology was that the Romantic poets' art "was so inextricably bound up with their biographies that to judge one was to judge both."<sup>6</sup> This Romantic ideology informed the early collecting practices of manuscript repositories in the area of literary papers.<sup>7</sup> It is implicit in the belief expressed in the contemporary archival literature that personal archives contain "glimpses of the [creator's] inner soul,"<sup>8</sup> and it is embedded in archival descriptions of writers' records. The introduction to the finding aid for the Marian Engel Fonds, for example, states that, "This archive is a particularly full reflection of Marian Engel's creative life.... [the] archive reflects the woman herself."<sup>9</sup>

The interpretive framework within which archivists operate, then, rests on three basic assumptions: first, that a writer's records have the potential to reveal the character and intentions of the writer herself; second, that such potential may be realized through the reconstruction of the records' original order; and third, that it is possible for archivists to represent a writer's records without imposing their own intentions on that representation. The first assumption will be examined in the second part of this article. In this part, the second and third assumptions will be examined in connection to the archival treatment of the records of Marian Engel, L.M. Montgomery, and Alice Munro.

Speaking of her experience researching in the archives of Alice Munro, JoAnn McCaig wryly observes:

If the Alice Munro archive had come to me exactly as its creator left it, I would be pawing through the jumbled contents of a steamer trunk and a battered blue suitcase. Instead the evidence before me is catalogued, organized and edited not only by its creator, Alice Munro, but also by the archivists who received it – archivists who decided, for example, that letters from editors, publishers, and peers should be assigned to individual files, while letters from ordinary readers should be collected in a single folder.<sup>10</sup>

6 Donald H. Reiman, "Nineteenth-Century British Poetry and Prose," in *Scholarly Editing: A Guide to Research*, ed. D.C. Greetham (New York, 1995), p. 311.

7 Ennis, p. 107.

8 Catherine Hobbs, "The Character of Personal Archives: Reflections on the Value of Records of Individuals," *Archivaria* 52 (Fall 2001), p. 126.

9 Kathleen Garay, comp., *The Marian Engel Archive* (Hamilton, 1984), pp. viii, xi.

10 McCaig, p. 14.

In both the Engel and Munro fonds, series were organized in conventional categories, e.g., correspondence, novels, short stories, notebooks; the correspondence is organized alphabetically by correspondent; and manuscript drafts are arranged according to the order in which the chapters or stories appear in the published version of the novel or short story collection. In some places, the processing archivists have attempted to call attention to their actions and to describe their decision-making processes. In other places, there is little elaboration on the nature of the work of the archivist in devising an arrangement. For example, in the introductions to the Munro and Engel inventories, descriptions of the manner in which correspondence series were established are passively worded (e.g., "General correspondence files are arranged alphabetically by corporate or individual correspondent"; "Letters from readers have been collected in one file, arranged chronologically ..."<sup>11</sup>), leaving the reader to wonder whether the arrangement was indeed "original," or whether it was mostly or entirely imposed by the processing archivists.<sup>12</sup>

The introduction to the inventory for the Marian Engel Fonds makes salient the difficulties that archivists face in attempting both to adhere to archival tenets and create a usable working order for researchers. Archivist K.E. Garay notes that when the fonds arrived at McMaster University it "was not in good order." Garay fairly easily managed to "separate and identify" correspondence, but fictional materials proved more complicated. Garay states that it was, "for the most part, impossible given the state of the material upon receipt, to reconstruct complete drafts." In order to present researchers with useable research material, Garay attempted, by following "internal evidence," to put the draft material in its order of composition.<sup>13</sup> For the material related to Engel's final, unpublished novel, Garay explains that, "the archivist has attempted to reconstruct the multiple drafts and fragments of this novel to reflect the creative process as accurately as possible."<sup>14</sup>

Processing archivists at the University of Calgary had to do the same for much of the material in the Alice Munro Fonds. Despite the emphasis in the "Archival Introduction" in the inventories for the first and second accessions on the importance of the principle of respect for original order, Jean Moore

11 Jean M. Moore and Jean F. Tener, comp., *The Alice Munro Papers First Accession: An Inventory of the Archive at the University of Calgary Libraries*, eds. Apollonia Steele and Jean F. Tener, with a biocritical essay by Thomas E. Tausky (Calgary, 1986), p. xxx.

12 The introduction to the Alice Munro Fonds inventory explains that since the "file or package represents the highest level of integrity for original order," the contents of a file are "maintained as strictly as possible." Despite its ambiguity, the wording related to the arrangement of the correspondence series suggests, rather, that items have been organized within files by processing archivists. *Ibid.*, p. xxv.

13 Garay, pp. vii-x.

14 Marian Engel Fonds, online finding aid for second through seventh accruals, <http://library.mcmaster.ca/archives/findaids/fonds/e/engel.htm> (accessed on 12 March 2009).

and Jean Tener explain that because the “majority” of Munro’s manuscripts are “undated and untitled,” and because “in many cases various drafts and fragments were mixed together when received by the University,” they were required to “sort the material and to pull together fragments from the same or similar drafts.”<sup>15</sup> The processing work completed by Moore and Tener and by Garay, is an attempt to reconstruct what they believed was the text intended by the writer and to reveal the writer’s “creative process.” Nevertheless, their work does not guarantee that the text they produce is in fact the intended text; the inventory to the Alice Munro papers states that theirs is a “tentative sort only.”<sup>16</sup>

Even when a writer has physically organized her records into a recognizable filing system, the archivist’s intellectual ordering of the records into fonds, sous-fonds, and series involves an act of imagination and interpretation. In other words, at higher levels of arrangement, the “original order” of the records is constructed, not found, by the archivist.<sup>17</sup> An inevitable consequence of the archivist’s physical and intellectual ordering of a writer’s records is the imposition of a particular narrative on the “orts, scraps and fragments”<sup>18</sup> of the writer’s life that have found their way into an archival institution. MaryAnne Dever’s description of her experience reading the incomplete correspondence between two Australian writers speaks to this point:

Placing these scattered letters to various recipients in sequence like this ... imposes an alien continuity on the letters, forcing an orderly seamless narrative from what were once scattered and discontinuous fragments.... Placed in such a context, individual letters also take on new significances, for placed together the correspondence has a plot of which the letters themselves could not be aware ... In other words, from the artful interlacing of these individual letters emerge unexpected patterns of response and ironies of juxtaposition.<sup>19</sup>

A similar example may be found in the Alice Munro Fonds. There, the fragments of a novel that was never published and never finished – variously entitled *Death of a White Fox*, *The White Norwegian*, and *The Norwegian*<sup>20</sup> – have been pieced together and placed in the “Novels” series rather than being included as part of another series within the same fonds entitled

15 Moore and Tener, p. xxx.

16 Ibid.

17 For a more detailed discussion of this point see Heather MacNeil, “Archivalterity: Rethinking Original Order,” *Archivaria* 66 (Fall 2008), pp. 1–24.

18 The phrase comes from Virginia Woolf’s last novel, *Between the Acts* (London, 1978), *passim*.

19 MaryAnne Dever, “Reading Other People’s Mail,” *Archives and Manuscripts* 24 (May 1996), p. 121.

20 Jean Tener, “The Invisible Iceberg,” in *The Art of Alice Munro: Saying the Unsayable: Papers from the Waterloo Conference*, ed. Judith Miller (Waterloo, 1984), p. 40.

"Fragments and Notebooks." The placement of these fragments in the Novels series implies a completeness that the novel never achieved. The potential to mislead is recognized by archivists. Jean Tener, the archivist who arranged the first accession of the Alice Munro Fonds, ruefully admits: "I did sometimes wake up at night wondering if I were putting pages of manuscript together to create versions [Munro] had never written. This must be a form of nightmare peculiar to archivists and manuscript curators."<sup>21</sup>

The archivists' reconstruction and representation of a writer's archive inevitably introduce new layers of narrative into the writer's archive. The preservation and acquisition practices of archival institutions create additional layers. Although they are done for practical reasons, the re-housing of the records into acid-free folders and boxes, and the meticulous numbering and stamping of each document communicate a significance and monumentality the records likely did not possess while they were in the custody of the writer. This sense of monumentality is reinforced, in some cases, by the accrual practices of archival institutions. Although L.M. Montgomery died in 1942, her archive includes documents created after her death that were donated by numerous friends and family members, as well as by the librarians and archivists at the University of Guelph, which holds a significant portion of her papers.

Montgomery took pains to control her posthumous reception and reputation both through the careful crafting and editing of her journals, and through her destruction of "quantities of letters and papers" prior to her death.<sup>22</sup> She appointed her son, Stuart Macdonald, as her literary executor and instructed him to prepare a version of her journal for publication if she had not already done so at the time of her death. Macdonald had intended to edit the journals himself, but eventually ceded the task to University of Guelph professor Mary Rubio, who had contacted him with the intention of asking his permission to write a biography of Montgomery. In 1981, Macdonald donated the journals and his mother's scrapbooks to the University of Guelph Library, and following his death, his widow donated the remainder of Macdonald's "Montgomery memorabilia," as well as some material created by Macdonald himself.<sup>23</sup> The collection now consists, among other things, of the journals and scrapbooks, a large photograph collection, baby books for Montgomery's

21 Ibid.

22 See for example Cecily Devereux, "'See my Journal for the full story': Fictions of Truth in *Anne of Green Gables* and L.M. Montgomery's Journals," in *The Intimate Life of L.M. Montgomery*, pp. 241–57; Janice Fiamengo, "...the refuge of my sick spirit...": L.M. Montgomery and the Shadows of Depression," in *The Intimate Life of L.M. Montgomery*, pp. 170–86; Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston, eds., "Introduction," in *The Selected Journals of L.M. Montgomery: Volume 1: 1889–1910* (Oxford, 1985), p. xxiv.

23 Carol Goodwin, "Lucy's Story," *Kitchener Waterloo Record* (22 November 1985[?]), L.M. Montgomery Collection, Archival and Special Collections, University of Guelph Library, Guelph, Ontario.

two sons, her library, artifacts (including the famous “Gog” and “Magog” statues, and Montgomery’s needlepoint), a small amount of correspondence, the typescript for *Doctor’s Sweetheart*, a significant number of newspaper and magazine articles related to Montgomery and to the Montgomery collection (in some cases only very peripherally), professional and personal records kept by Macdonald, “Anne of Green Gables” dolls and board games, and copies of scholarly assessments of her work and life. This is clearly not the “record” that Montgomery intended to leave behind her; instead, the L.M. Montgomery Collection at Guelph has grown as a kind of shrine or monument to Montgomery, begun by her son and Rubio, and continued by the numerous donors, archivists, and librarians who have added to the collection over the years. Its status as a shrine tells us as much about the archives’ need to monumentalize and memorialize her life as it does about Montgomery herself.

Speaking about archives in general, Michelle Light and Tom Hyry argue that:

At their heart, respect for original order and provenance address our mediating role in arrangement and description. They strive to reduce the archivist’s meddling impact and influence on the records, so that the context of the records’ creation and use is preserved and the authenticity of the records’ evidence is maintained. Yet even strict adherence to these concepts does not prevent the archivist from significantly influencing the transmittal of information through different steps of the records’ life cycle.<sup>24</sup>

In each of the archives studied here, there is ample evidence of the “archivist’s meddling impact.” The examples suggest that the archivist does not simply reconstruct and represent a writer’s archive: she shapes it in a manner comparable to that of an editor, tidying up the text, smoothing out the rough edges, and punching it up in places.<sup>25</sup> The examples also suggest that at least two of the three assumptions that underpin archivists’ interpretive framework – that the arrangement of a writer’s archive reflects the writer’s character and intentions, and that it is possible for archivists to represent a writer’s records without imposing their own intentions on that representation – need to be qualified. But what about the first assumption, the one from which the other two follow, i.e., that a writer’s records have the potential to reveal the character and intentions of the writer herself? To answer that question, we will look at the three writers’ archives in the context of the literature on life writing.<sup>26</sup>

24 Michele Light and Tom Hyry, “Colophons and Annotations: New Directions for the Finding Aid,” *American Archivist* 65 (Fall/Winter 2002), pp. 219–20.

25 The notion of the archivist as editor is explored more extensively in Heather MacNeil, “Picking our Text”: Archival Description, Authenticity, and the Archivist as Editor,” *American Archivist* 68 (Fall/Winter 2005), pp. 264–78.

26 Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, leading scholars of the genre, define life writing as “a general term for writing of diverse kinds that takes a life as its subject.” Marlene Kadar



## Life Writing

We have established that the principles of archival arrangement are posited on the assumption that records can and do function as a mirror of their creator. A similar belief in the possibility of accessing the mind or psyche of a writer through his or her “documentary remains” is discussed in the theoretical literature on life writing. During the so-called “first wave” of life writing criticism, it was assumed that any kind of autobiographical writing was necessarily representative of its writer, and the writer’s text was presumed to unproblematically reflect his or her consciousness. However, more recent theoretical literature on life writing has rejected the idea that an essential inner self is revealed in various forms of life writing, including forms usually found in archives such as diaries, journals, and letters; instead life writing theorists argue that identity is provisional and contextual, and suggest that there are multiple selves who write and are written into personal texts.

Speaking of her own letter-writing practices, Janna Malamud Smith observes, “I make order by at once evoking and creating a persona ... through which I interpret and organize experience. While this might sound like a disingenuous enterprise, I am only highlighting how the self is rather a vast archives of selves, each one ... expressive of a slightly different nuance of psyche and experience.”<sup>27</sup> When Smith suggests that the creation of an epistolary persona might seem to some a “disingenuous” act, she speaks to expectations readers still often have of life writing genres such as the personal letter or diary – that is, that they be sincere expressions of an authentic or true inner self. Smith counters such expectations with a view of the writer at work on crafting a written version of her self, choosing from a variety of possible representations and arranging the self as the circumstances of writing require.

Sidonie Smith adopts a similar view of life writing, describing it as a “performative act,” in which the writer assembles a performance from a variety of scripts (cultural, historical, etc.) available to her. By emphasizing the

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identifies as life writing various forms of writing “about the ‘self’” including such forms as autobiography, letters, and diaries. Most recently the list of life writing forms has been expanded to include Web pages, personal interviews, ethnographies, photograph albums, home movies, etc. Here, we focus on forms most typically seen in personal archives (e.g., diaries, letters, etc.). See Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis and London, 2001), p. 3; Marlene Kadar, “Coming to Terms: Life Writing – from Genre to Critical Practice,” in *Essays on Life Writing: From Genre to Critical Practice*, ed. Marlene Kadar (Toronto, Buffalo, and London, 1992), pp. 4–5; Paul John Eakin, “Introduction: Mapping the Ethics of Life Writing,” in *The Ethics of Life Writing*, ed. Paul John Eakin (New York, 2004), p. 1.

27 Janna Malamud Smith, *Private Matters: In Defense of the Personal Life* (Reading, 1996), p. 153.

“performative” nature of texts such as diaries and letters, Smith highlights the complicated relationship that exists between the self that writes, and the self (or selves) performed in the text. As Smith notes, “the narrator is both the same and not the same as the [writer], and the narrator is both the same and not the same as the subject of narration.”<sup>28</sup>

With Julia Watson, Smith theorizes the differences between the self or selves that write, and the self (or selves) that are written, describing the multiple “I”s involved in life writing acts. Smith and Watson distinguish between the “real or historical I” and the “narrating I” in the following way: “While the historical ‘I’ has a broad experiential history extending a lifetime back into the past, the narrating ‘I’ calls forth only that part of the experiential history linked to the story he is telling.” In other words, there is a more dispersed and diverse self that stands behind the version of the self that writes. Smith and Watson also identify a “narrated I,” which they define as the “version of the self that the narrating ‘I’ chooses to construct,” and which, they insist, exists only in the text at hand.<sup>29</sup>

As this taxonomy makes clear, the correspondence between the “real or historical I,” the “narrating I,” and the “narrated I” is not exact. Telling or writing about one’s life and experience involves the teller in active self-construction and self-projection. The author of a diary or letter does not merely reveal herself in the text, but instead creates a version of herself that exists *only* in the text.<sup>30</sup> Thus, while a diary or letter might supply readers with autobiographical details, it does not, and cannot, provide them with perfect access to the “real or historical I” behind the “narrating” and “narrated” “I”s.

In the case of L.M. Montgomery’s diaries, the correspondence between the “real” Montgomery, and the “narrating” and “narrated” Montgomeris has been the subject of much discussion. Montgomery scholars have remarked on the stir caused by the publication of her selected journals, when people who had known Montgomery during her lifetime as the popular author, devoted mother, cousin and aunt, and cheerful minister’s wife were confronted by

28 Sidonie Smith, “Performativity, Autobiographical Practice, Resistance,” *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* 10 (Spring 1995), p. 18.

29 Smith and Watson, pp. 59–60.

30 While Smith and Watson discuss all types of life writing, scholars of the diary and letter genres in particular also emphasize the differences between the self that writes and the self that is constructed through the act of writing. Judy Simons, for example, describes the self constructed in the diary as “a fictional persona, a version of the self that the diarist wishes to project, however unconsciously,” while Catherine R. Stimpson, describing the letter writer as an “actress,” quotes Virginia Woolf who believed that “all letter writing involves the donning of a mask.” Judy Simons, *Diaries and Journals of Literary Women from Fanny Burney to Virginia Woolf* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, and London, 1990), p. 12; Catherine R. Stimpson, “The Female Sociography: The Theatre of Virginia Woolf’s Letters,” in *The Female Autography*, ed. Donna C. Stanton (Chicago, 1984), p. 170.

an entirely different image of Montgomery as depressed, irritated by her “endless responsibilities,” and almost completely pessimistic.<sup>31</sup> Montgomery’s editors, Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston, recognize the incongruity of the various “versions” of Montgomery’s life in circulation, and while they admit the difficulty of separating the living Montgomery from the diary persona she created, they also insist that, “no such thing as a ‘true personality’ could ever emerge” from a reading of the journals.<sup>32</sup>

Montgomery was an avid diary writer, and kept her journal for fifty-three years, from the age of fourteen until just before her death in 1942. The diary served a number of purposes for her over the years. In its earliest days, it offered her a congenial pastime. Over time she became increasingly attached to the diary, seeing it as a friend and confidant, and eventually treating it as a kind of monument to her life.<sup>33</sup> On 16 April 1922, Montgomery recorded in her journal her wish that the journals “*never be destroyed but be kept as long as the leaves hold together*” [italics in original]; indeed, she invoked a “Shakespearean curse” on anyone who dared to destroy the journals, suggesting that to do so would be akin to “murder.” In the same entry, she granted permission to her heirs to publish a version of the journals after her death.<sup>34</sup>

Montgomery’s developing sense of her diary as a document of her life that would come to represent her in particular ways to her fans and readers, alerts us to the presence of other “I”s involved in the construction and representation of the self: “I”s we are here calling the “archiving” and “archived” “I”s. The “archiving I” makes decisions about the retention and disposition of the various documents and texts that will be preserved as the archive of the self. In Montgomery’s case, the “archiving I” is aware of the future publicity of the archive, and, as many Montgomery scholars have noted, the diaries are consequently rife with omission. In numerous places Montgomery refers to problems and concerns of which she cannot or dare not write; by the mid-1930s, phrases such as “It is too cruel and hideous to write about,”<sup>35</sup> and “I can’t write it,”<sup>36</sup> punctuate the majority of her entries. Aware of future read-

31 Mary Rubio, “A Dusting Off”: An Anecdotal Account of Editing the L.M. Montgomery Journals,” in *Working in Women’s Archives: Researching Women’s Private Literature and Archival Documents*, eds. Helen M. Buss and Marlene Kadar (Waterloo, 2001), p. 65.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 58.

33 Montgomery spent many years recopying her earlier journals into uniform volumes, at the same time adding photographs to illustrate the text. In later years, she moved memorabilia from her scrapbooks to the journals’ pages in order to preserve them, and also used the journals to store letters that held particular significance for her.

34 L.M. Montgomery, *The Selected Journals of L.M. Montgomery: Volume III: 1921–1929*, eds. Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston (Oxford, 1992), p. 51.

35 L.M. Montgomery, *The Selected Journals of L.M. Montgomery: Volume IV: 1929–1935*, eds. Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston (Oxford, 1998), p. 214.

36 L.M. Montgomery, *The Selected Journals of L.M. Montgomery: Volume V: 1935–1942*, eds. Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston (Oxford, 2004), p. 111.

ers, Montgomery adjusted her mask, disclosing only what she could bear to have those readers know.

In the case of Marian Engel, there is a similar awareness of audience on the part of the “archiving I.” For example, in a newspaper article Engel wrote shortly after selling her papers, she imagined the future audience of her archive as graduate students and professors bent on using her papers to “dig ... out” her neuroses and assess her psychological state. She warns these researchers that they will not find what they are looking for. “I’m not telling,” she insists, and thereby implies that the archive has been constructed in such a way that it will guard her secrets and her privacy.<sup>37</sup> Engel was careful about what made its way into the Marian Engel Fonds at McMaster University. In a preparatory inventory drawn up of the papers to be sold to McMaster, it is made clear that Engel did not wish to sell correspondence between her and her friends. She agreed to make available all of the correspondence that she had kept between herself and publishers, literary agents, and fans as well as a series of letters she had written to her mother and sister during the time she lived in Europe.<sup>38</sup> Despite some misgivings, Engel also included a series of letters sent to her from Pauline McGibbon<sup>39</sup>; although Engel worried she was making “a human sacrifice” of her friend, she was also in dire need of the extra money she was offered for these particular letters.<sup>40</sup>

Like Engel, Alice Munro is reticent about exposing personal documents in her archive.<sup>41</sup> McCaig describes Munro as a notoriously private person and explains the “two filtering processes” by which her archive is assembled. First, documents to be included are selected by Munro herself. McCaig notes that Munro has been “very careful to include only documents pertaining to the business of writing; there are no personal letters or journals or diaries in the collection.”<sup>42</sup> The second filter that McCaig describes is “provided by the

37 Marian Engel, “Public Psychologising,” TMs (photocopy), Marian Engel Fonds, The William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario [hereafter Marian Engel Fonds]. This text is a draft of an article published in *The Globe and Mail*.

38 “Marian Engel Archive,” TMs (photocopy), Marian Engel Fonds.

39 The Honourable Pauline McGibbon was the first female Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, the first female chancellor of both the University of Guelph and the University of Toronto, and a lifelong supporter of the arts in Canada. In 1981 she was made a Companion of the Order of Canada.

40 Marian Engel, to Pauline McGibbon, 2 November 1982, Marian Engel Fonds. Engel was separated from her husband and raising twins on a very small income. She was also ill with terminal cancer.

41 Alice Munro is, of course, still living. No attempt was made in this initial exploratory project to investigate the differences between the construction and shaping of the archives of living versus deceased authors; this is a topic that merits greater attention in future research.

42 In fact, the inventory to the fonds explains that Munro has restricted all personal letters

archival staff who catalogued the material.” She explains that staff have been instructed to contact Munro if any “excessively revealing personal document” is unearthed to ask whether she had intended it to become part of the fonds. As McCaig observes, “readers who seek revelations about Munro’s personal life” will have to seek them elsewhere.<sup>43</sup>

The guarded attitudes of Montgomery, Engel, and Munro should give us cause to reconsider the idea of the archival fonds as a true reflection of its creator. In “The Mysterious Outside Reader,” Adrian Cunningham stresses the role that awareness of posterity plays in the making and keeping of personal records.<sup>44</sup> In each of the three cases studied here, Cunningham’s assertion rings true; the writers’ awareness of posterity has certainly affected the choices they make about what to reveal and what to keep hidden. McCaig explains that she looks to the Munro archive for a “portion of the story – not *the* truth, but *a* truth about the author function – the ‘plurality of selves’ – known as Alice Munro.”<sup>45</sup> Her comments indicate the need to approach the personal archive warily, expecting not to find an “inner soul” but to be confronted by the writer at work on the construction of a public image, the archiving “I” shaping the archived “I” that will come to represent the writer. From this perspective, the fonds might more accurately reflect its creator’s decisions and efforts to create it as such.

As well as encountering the writer at work, the reader or researcher of the archive will also often find traces of the work of other individuals with a vested interest in its shape and meaning. While in the literature on personal archives there is a tendency to perceive the creator of a literary fonds as a sort of solitary genius, in each of the archives studied here, one notes the presence of what Smith and Watson refer to as “coaxers and coercers,” individuals who suggest, whether subtly or explicitly, a particular way of constructing the life narrative.<sup>46</sup> We have seen how archivists may act as coaxers, adding new layers of meaning to literary archives through acquisition, arrangement and description, and preservation practices. However, even before a writer’s fonds reaches an archival repository, relatives, friends, agents, and executors may participate in the formation of the archive over time, helping to determine its boundaries and contents, and sometimes even contributing materials of their own.

The shaping of the L.M. Montgomery Collection by Montgomery’s son, biographer, and numerous other donors has already been mentioned. Letters

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included in the fonds for an undisclosed period of time.

43 McCaig, p. xiii.

44 Adrian Cunningham, “The Mysterious Outside Reader,” *Archives and Manuscripts* 24 (May 1996), pp. 130–44.

45 McCaig, p. 16.

46 Smith and Watson, pp. 50, 53.

in the Alice Munro Fonds show that Munro received a good deal of prompting from outside forces before she agreed to part with any of her papers. The University of Calgary acquired the first accession of the Alice Munro Fonds in the mid-1980s. The inventory for this accession indicates that, “an early approach had been made” to Munro in 1974.<sup>47</sup> That year, Munro received a letter from Mordecai Richler in which he admitted to having spoken to the “librarian at Calgary” about her papers. In the letter he advises her to “Stop throwing thgs out,” because “there’s a market for yr [sic] detritus and mine.”<sup>48</sup>

Later, her literary agent, Virginia Barber, more forcefully prompted Munro to consider the importance of the establishment of an “Alice Munro Archive.” Included in the second Munro accession is a file that contains letters sent between Barber and Alan H. MacDonald, Director of Libraries at the University of Calgary. These letters are closed to researchers, and so the details of the negotiation and transfer cannot be known. However, in the letters in this file from Barber to Munro, Barber’s commanding role in the negotiations with Calgary is evident. As Munro’s agent, Barber would have recognized not only the financial gain for Munro in selling her papers, but also the prestige and recognition that such a sale would entail. In Barber’s letters, the Alice Munro fonds is revealed as a type of business transaction from which, presumably, Munro, Barber, and the University of Calgary will benefit, and, as such, each of the interested parties has a say in what types of material should make up the fonds and how they will be treated.<sup>49</sup>

The purpose of looking at the archives of Munro, Engel, and Montgomery through the lens of the literature on life writing has been to investigate the validity of the assumption – implicit in the interpretive framework of archival principles – that a writer’s records have the potential to reveal the character and intentions of the writer herself. The examination suggests that this assumption, like the other two explored in section I, requires qualification. The capacity of a writer’s archive to reveal her character and intentions, inevitably, is constrained and obscured by the writer’s own efforts to conceal and edit the self, and by the imposition of intentions other than those of the writer on the archive.

## Conclusion

In “New Approaches to Canadian Literary Archives,” Catherine Hobbs maintains that, in arranging and describing a literary fonds, archivists should

47 Moore and Tener, p. xxix.

48 Mordecai Richler, to Alice Munro, 14 May 1974, Alice Munro Fonds, University of Calgary Library Special Collections and Archives, Calgary, Alberta [hereafter Alice Munro Fonds].

49 See letters in the “Virginia Barber” file of the “Correspondence” series, Alice Munro Fonds, second accession.

seek to “capture [its] nature from the inside, reflecting the author’s thinking space.”<sup>50</sup> Our examination of three writers’ archives suggests that this may be easier said than done. When read as a personal and psychological text, a writer’s archive is deeply ambiguous; the writer herself is continually performing different versions of the self, and various other selves – friends, colleagues, and archivists among others – participate in shaping the meaning of the archive. That being the case, a writer’s archive is perhaps best understood as a social and collaborative text rather than a purely psychological one. Viewing the archive in this way invites us to see it as an ongoing conversation between the writer and her various selves, between the writer and other interested parties who contribute to the archive, between the writer and the archivist who arranges her papers, and between the writer and each user who encounters her through those papers.<sup>51</sup>

50 Catherine Hobbs, “New Approaches to Canadian Literary Archives,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 40 (Spring 2006), p. 114.

51 This perspective on a writer’s archive is the focus of Jennifer Douglas’s doctoral research. Douglas is exploring the ways in which frameworks of analysis suggested by the literature on life writing may help archivists better understand the nature of writers’ archives, and contribute to the development of a theory for arrangement and description that relates specifically to personal archives.