

The Archiving “I”: A Closer Look in the Archives of Writers¹



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RÉSUMÉ En 2009 Heather MacNeil et moi-même avons publié dans cette revue l'article « *Arranging the Self: Literary and Archival Perspectives on Writers' Archives* ». En s'inspirant des écrits scientifiques au sujet du récit de vie, notre texte a introduit les concepts du « "je" qui archive » et des « cajoleurs et des contrôleurs » pour aborder les divers agents qui façonnent les archives au fil du temps et pour déclarer que la création des archives est un type de performance. Ici, les concepts sont explorés davantage, en s'appuyant sur une recherche conduite dans les archives de huit auteurs canadiens et américains, à la fois pour montrer comment le travail du « je » qui archive et des cajoleurs et contrôleurs affecte le développement des archives des auteurs et pour avancer des idées sur l'implication que cela peut avoir pour l'élaboration de la théorie sur les archives personnelles.

ABSTRACT In 2009, in this journal, Heather MacNeil and I published “Arranging the Self: Literary and Archival Perspectives on Writers’ Archives.” Drawing on the critical literature on life writing, the article introduced the concepts of the “archiving ‘I’” and of “coaxers and coercers” to talk about the various agents that shape an archive over time, and to argue that the creation of an archive is a type of performative act. Here, the concepts are examined in more depth, drawing on research in the archives of eight Canadian and American writers, to show how the work of the archiving “I” and of coaxers and coercers affects the development of writers’ archives and to suggest the implications for the development of theory for personal archives.

1 This article is an abbreviated and adapted version of the third chapter of my doctoral dissertation, “Archiving Authors: Rethinking the Analysis and Representation of Personal Archives” (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2013). I am grateful for the financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the School of Library, Archival and Information Studies at the University of British Columbia, the Faculty of Information at the University of Toronto, and the York University Archives, Toronto.

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 her papers.²

Introduction

In 2009, Heather MacNeil and I published an article in this journal that reported on a small, exploratory research project on the archives of Lucy Maud Montgomery, Alice Munro, and Marian Engel.³ In that article, we examined the three writers' archives through two interpretive frameworks, that is the archival principles of arrangement and description and the literature on life writing,⁴ to assess the extent to which we could know each writer – her character, her personality, her intentions – through her archive. Influenced by ideas about the performative self in life writing,⁵ MacNeil and I introduced the taxonomy of selves involved in autobiographical writing as theorized by Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson. These include: (1) the “real” or historical “I,” who is a “real” person, the author, whose identity can be verified, but who is ultimately “unknown and unknowable” via a text because his life is always “more diverse and dispersed than the story ... being told”; (2) the “narrating ‘I,’” which is the “I” available and knowable to readers, the “I” who “calls forth ... that part of the experiential history linked to the story he is telling”;

2 Jennifer Douglas and Heather MacNeil, “Arranging the Self: Literary and Archival Perspectives on Writers’ Archives,” *Archivaria* 67 (Spring 2009): 39.

3 *Ibid.*, 25–39.

4 Life writing is defined by Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson as “a general term for writing of diverse kinds that takes a life as its subject.” It is a kind of writing “about the ‘self,’” and can include such forms as autobiography, letters, diaries, blogs, photograph albums, ethnographies, etc.; see Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minneapolis Press, 2001), 3. See also 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: University of Toronto Press, 1992), 4–5.

5 See, for example, Sidonie Smith, “Performativity, Autobiographical Practice, Resistance,” *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* 10, no. 1 (1995); and Janna Malamud Smith, *Private Matters: In Defense of the Personal Life* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1997).

and (3) the "narrated 'I,'" which is "the version of the self that the narrating 'I' chooses to constitute ... for the reader."⁶

Smith and Watson intended to show how the author of a life-writing text does not, by writing autobiographically, simply reflect herself in the text, but rather "creates a version of herself that exists *only* in the text."⁷ Based on our analysis of the three writers' fonds, MacNeil and I posited the existence of two analogous "I"s that are at work in the creation of a personal *archive*. These are the "archiving 'I'" and the "archived 'I.'" The archiving "I" is the "I" who makes decisions about what will represent the "'real' or historical 'I'" as part of her archive. This archiving "I," like Smith and Watson's "narrating 'I,'" is involved in the construction of yet another "I": the archived "I," another completely textual "I" and the result of the archiving "I"'s acts of selection, retention, and representation.

In "Arranging the Self," we provide a brief introduction to these concepts, and suggest how each writer took specific steps to control the shape her archives would assume. Additionally, we show how other interested parties, who Smith and Watson might call "coaxers and coercers,"⁸ also have a hand in shaping each fonds. As stated, the purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which it was possible to know a creator through her records; as a result, in part of our analysis of the workings of the archiving "I" and of coaxers and coercers, we concluded that "the capacity of a writer's archive" to reflect its creator is inevitably "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." We suggested that a writer's archive might best be understood as a "social and collaborative text" and "as an ongoing conversation" between the writer and all the various shapers of its contents and meaning.⁹

"Arranging the Self" was intended as an introduction to these ideas, which I then explored in greater detail during the remainder of my doctoral studies. This article reports on that further research, and is intended to provide a closer look at the concepts of the archiving "I" and coaxers and coercers, how they are involved in shaping fonds, and what the implications of this shaping are for the development of theory for personal archives. After a brief section introducing the archives I discuss, the article begins with a close reading of the development of the archiving "I" as part of L.M. Montgomery's recordkeeping

6 Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, 59–60.

7 Douglas and MacNeil, "Arranging the Self," 34.

8 Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography*, 50–53. Smith and Watson define coaxers and coercers as individuals who suggest, in ways ranging from explicit to implicit, a particular way of telling a life story. A coaxer or coercer may be an editor, a family member, a community ethos, etc.

9 *Ibid.*, 38.

habits, and then looks to the archives of other writers to see how the archiving “I” manifests in additional cases. The second half of the article focuses on the shaping acts of coaxers and coercers in different writers’ archives. Throughout, I consider the degree to which writers’ archives can be read as psychological texts, concluding with a caution to archivists to recognize our limitations in this regard.

The Archives Consulted

The analysis of the archiving “I” and of coaxers and coercers in this article is drawn from my doctoral dissertation. For that dissertation, I undertook research in the archives of eight Canadian and American writers¹⁰ and conducted qualitative expert interviews with thirteen Canadian archivists and librarians who regularly work with writers’ archives. The archives studied include:

- the Sylvia Plath Collection at the Mortimer Rare Book Room, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts;
- the Sylvia Plath Collection at the Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana;
- the Marian Engel Fonds at the William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario;
- the Alice Munro Fonds at Archives and Special Collections, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta;
- the L.M. Montgomery Collection at Archival and Special Collections, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario;
- the Dorothy Livesay Fonds at Archives and Special Collections, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba;
- the Douglas Coupland Fonds at Rare Books and Special Collections, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia;
- the Margaret Atwood Papers at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario;
- the Margaret Laurence Fonds at the Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, York University, Toronto, Ontario.

10 I believe that writers’ archives provide a good starting point for the study of personal archives because they are widely available in libraries and archives and frequently discussed in academic literature, and in popular news media and magazines. At the same time, Adrian Cunningham notes that, by virtue of their occupation, “creative writers create more records and are better recordkeepers” than many other types of records creators, and writers’ archives are more likely than many other types of personal archives to be preserved in large quantities by archival repositories; as such, there may be differences between writers’ archives as a *type* of archive and those of other creators, and future studies might investigate these differences. See Adrian Cunningham, “The Mysterious Outside Reader,” *Archives and Manuscripts* 24 (May 1996): 132.

These archives were selected based on three main criteria. First, I chose archives based on size and comprehensiveness; the fuller and more complete a fonds, the more likely it is broadly representative of its creator’s activities over time. To be selected, fonds had to include a number of series relating to a variety of writing projects, as well as to a variety of stages in the writer’s career and personal life. The second criterion was the availability of a secondary literature related to the archives that could provide additional information about the creator and about the archive. For each of the archives selected, a variety of sources were available, including literary biographies, literary studies related to materials found in the archives, institutional documentation about the archive, and so on.¹¹ Finally, archives were also selected on the basis of the evidence that they provided – or that existed outside of the archive – of the processes that led to their creation. These processes are discussed at length in the remainder of this article.

L.M. Montgomery’s Diary and the Development of an Archiving “I”

Montgomery’s surviving journals begin with an entry penned 21 September 1889, when Montgomery was fourteen years old. Montgomery kept her journal until just before her death fifty-three years later, in 1942. In that first entry, Montgomery confesses that she has kept a diary since the age of nine but that she burned it that day because it was “silly” and “very dull” and she was “ashamed of it.” She intends her new diary to be more interesting, promising that she will write only when she has “something worth writing about.” She also insists, “Last but *not* least – I am going to keep this book locked up!”¹²

- 11 The secondary literature related to the contents and construction of particular archives tends to focus more on the archives of women writers than on those of male writers; in the 1980s and 1990s, especially, one way of calling attention to overlooked women’s writing was to study unpublished writings, often found in archives or private collections. A number of books and articles were published focusing on women’s private writings, including Helen M. Buss and Marlene Kadar, eds., *Working in Women’s Archives: Researching Women’s Private Literature and Archival Documents* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001) and Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia A. Huff, eds., *Inscribing the Daily: Critical Essays on Women’s Diaries* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996). Books on women’s archives continue to be published; see, for example, Linda Morra and Jessica Schagerl, eds., *Basements and Attics, Closets and Cyberspace: Explorations in Canadian Women’s Archives* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2012) and Maryanne Dever, Sally Newman, and Ann Vickery, eds., *The Intimate Archive: Journeys through Private Papers* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2009). Because I hoped to make use of secondary literature on the different archives I studied, and because a secondary literature on *archives* was more often available for the archives of women writers, the list of selected archives is heavily skewed toward women writers. While I am not convinced at this point that there is a fundamental difference between the archives of men and women writers, future study may benefit from a stronger focus on archives created by male writers.
- 12 L.M. Montgomery, *The Selected Journals of L.M. Montgomery: Volume I, 1889–1910*,

Montgomery's stated intentions reveal that she originally conceived of her diary as a completely private document. In later years, too, she noted that she kept her diaries locked up in a trunk, for which only she possessed a key, and explained that she did not want "anyone ... [to] have access to those diaries."¹³ As numerous diary scholars have pointed out, the presumed privacy of the diary is one of its distinguishing generic features. Traditionally, diary writing has been understood as a private activity and the diary as a place where intimate thoughts and feelings are recorded.¹⁴ At the same time, diary scholars call attention to the paradoxical fact that, by virtue of having been written, diaries invite reading. Judy Simons, for example, acknowledges that "by their choice of mode as written documents all diaries imply readership," but recognizes also that the reader and writer may simply be "one and the same." Indeed, Simons suggests that reading the journal can be as important to its author as writing it.¹⁵

Montgomery was an avid reader of her own diaries. Throughout the journals, there are many descriptions of time spent reading over old journals, and the most obvious of Montgomery's imagined readers is her future self. Reflecting on the contents of the first volume of her diary, Montgomery states that she has kept it "as a record of [her] doings which might be of interest to

ed. Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 1. Throughout this section, I refer to the published selected journals. In their introductions to each of the five volumes, Rubio and Waterston explain that the selected journals include some omissions but that these are of "entries that are either repetitive or non-essential to the unfolding drama of Montgomery's life." During my research visit to view the L.M. Montgomery Collection at the University of Guelph, I was able to confirm that this was largely the case; for the most part, the overall tenor of the selected journals is true to that of the originals in the L.M. Montgomery Collection, and material omitted is primarily descriptive or reflective of included entries. Some of the material omitted from the published journals seems also to have been removed in an attempt to protect individuals named and discussed by Montgomery. For example, Montgomery's accounts of her friendship and falling-out with a female fan are curtailed in the published version. In 2012, a complete volume of the journals from the years 1889 to 1900 was published, which includes earlier, omitted entries; see L.M. Montgomery, *The Complete Journals of L.M. Montgomery: The PEI Years, 1889–1900*, ed. Mary Henley Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). See also Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston, "Introduction," in L.M. Montgomery, *The Selected Journals: Volume I*, xxiii.

13 L.M. Montgomery, *The Selected Journals of L.M. Montgomery: Volume III, 1921–1929*, ed. Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 383.

14 See, for example, Irina Paperno, "What Can Be Done with Diaries?" *The Russian Review* 63, no. 3 (October 2004): 561–74; Steven Rendall, "On Diaries," review of *Private Chronicles: A Study of English Diaries*, by Robert Fothergill, and *Le journal intime*, by Béatrice Didier, *Diacritics* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 1986): 56–65; Rachel Cottam, "Dairies and Journals: General Survey," in *The Encyclopedia of Life Writing: Autobiographical and Biographical Forms*, ed. Margareta Jolly (London and Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001), 72–73.

15 Judy Simons, *Diaries and Journals of Literary Women from Fanny Burney to Virginia Woolf* (Basingstoke and London, UK: Houndmills, 1990), 10.

[her] in after years,”¹⁶ and in her “after years” Montgomery found the journals not only interesting but also capable of transporting her back to happier days. In 1904, Montgomery notes that she has been reading over the part of her diary written while she lived with her father in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, and enjoyed the company of exceptionally close friends she made at school. She writes, “It brought back those days and sensations with almost startling vividness. That is what I like best in diary keeping – its power to reproduce past scenes and feelings and emotions.”¹⁷ In later years, suffering increasingly from anxious and depressed states of mind, she frequently turned to her journals, willing herself to be “bewitched back into the past,”¹⁸ and although she found the contrast between the happiness of her young girlhood and the wretchedness of many of her later years to be “very very dreadful,”¹⁹ she also clearly found in her re-reading a source of sustenance and fulfillment.

Montgomery’s future self is not the diary’s only addressee, however; in a sense, Montgomery perceived the diary itself as an audience. Especially after she gave up teaching to care for her grandmother following her grandfather’s death, Montgomery addressed her journal as a friend and confidant. She explains a change in tone and content between the first and second volumes of the diary, noting that while the first volume seems to have been written by “a rather shallow girl, whose sole aim was to ‘have a good time’ and who thought of little else than the surface play of life,” the second volume “gives the impression of a morbid temperament, generally in the throes of nervousness and gloom.” The difference between the two volumes is due largely, she believes, to the fact that the first volume was not required as a confidant but, as mentioned above, was conceived of primarily as an interesting record for her future self. The later volume, written at a time when Montgomery felt she had outgrown old friendships and was becoming increasingly isolated, became “the refuge of [her] sick spirit,” a friend to whom she could turn “when loneliness and solitude had broken down [her] powers of endurance,”²⁰ and her “only safe outlet.”²¹

The excerpts cited above indicate that Montgomery frequently envisioned her diary primarily as a private text that could provide her with comfort, ease her loneliness, and allow her to re-experience happier times. The last fact established, however, there is no doubt that in later years Montgomery grew

16 L.M. Montgomery, *The Selected Journals of L.M. Montgomery: Volume II*, ed. Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 2.

17 Montgomery, *The Selected Journals: Volume I*, 292.

18 L.M. Montgomery, *The Selected Journals of L.M. Montgomery: Volume IV*, ed. Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 167.

19 L.M. Montgomery, *The Selected Journals of L.M. Montgomery: Volume V*, ed. Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 185.

20 Montgomery, *The Selected Journals: Volume II*, 2.

21 Ibid.

to view the diary as a potentially public document. Robert Fothergill suggests that when a diary “grows to a certain length and substance, it impresses upon the mind of its writer a conception of the completed book it might ultimately be.” From this point on, the diarist becomes committed not only to the practice of keeping the diary, but also to the diary as the “book of the self” and a major oeuvre in its own right. He points out that writers will often express the diary’s “importance as an *oeuvre*” by taking “considerable care over [its] physical condition, transcribing it, making an index, [and] having it handsomely bound.”²² Sometime in the winter of 1918–19, Montgomery began the arduous task of copying by hand her entire diary, composed at that time in “various ‘blank books’ of equally various shapes and sizes,” into uniform ledgers.²³ She admitted the hard work involved and accepted that it would take her a long time to do, being able to spare only fifteen minutes a day, but felt it would be “a satisfaction when done.”²⁴ When she decided to copy the diary, she also decided to illustrate many of the entries by pasting in photographs of the people and scenes she had written about. Montgomery is presumed to have destroyed the original diaries she wrote between 1889 and 1918, and today what survives of her efforts are ten handwritten volumes in legal-sized ledgers and a heavily marked typescript version of these, which she is thought to have been preparing for publication.²⁵

Several Montgomery scholars recognize in Montgomery’s decision to copy her journals a concomitant acknowledgement on her part of the journals’ future literary value. In April 1922, when she finished copying the older journals, Montgomery wrote, “This journal is a faithful record of one human being’s life and so should have a certain literary value.” Further, she concedes that her heirs “might publish an *abridged volume* after [her] death” if she has not already done so herself.²⁶ Beginning in early 1917, an awareness of these heirs is felt in the diary. For example, on 5 January 1917, Montgomery objects to comments made by the editor of *The Alpine Path*,²⁷ her autobiographical account of her writing career. This editor complained that the book contained no accounts of her “love affairs.” Montgomery insists that the “dear public must get along without this particular tid-bit,” but decides that for her own

22 Robert A. Fothergill, *Private Chronicles: A Study of English Diaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 44.

23 Montgomery, *The Selected Journals: Volume II*, 341.

24 *Ibid.*

25 Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston, “Introduction,” in L.M. Montgomery, *The Selected Journals of L.M. Montgomery: Volume IV*, ed. Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), xxix.

26 Montgomery, *The Selected Journals: Volume III*, 51.

27 L.M. Montgomery, *The Alpine Path: The Story of My Career* (Markham, ON: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1997).

“amusement” she will write a “full and frank – at least as frank as possible” account of her affairs. She adds,

Possibly my grandchildren – or my great grandchildren – may read it and say, “Why, we remember grandma as a thin, wrinkled, little gray-haired body, always sitting in a warm corner, with a hug-me-tight on, reading a book (If I am ever a grandmother I am going to do nothing but read books and do filet crochet!). Surely she couldn’t really have lived these love stories.”

Yes, dear unborn grandchildren, I did.²⁸

Throughout the next few years, Montgomery refers several times to her “descendents” [*sic*] as a future audience. On 31 January 1920, she writes, “I have not found anything much pleasanter than talking with the right kind of man – except – but I won’t write it. My descendents might be shocked.”²⁹ The next year she jots down “a detailed account” of her “doings through the whole week,” suggesting that her “great-great-grandchildren may use it as a peg on which to hang compassionate opinions as to what country ministers’ wives did back in the old-fashioned days a century ago.”³⁰

In 1917, when she first began to refer to her heirs and descendants, Montgomery was in her early forties and had recently become a mother to two young sons. As she matured and reveled in the joy of her own family, Montgomery began to view her diary as a potentially interesting family document. While copying older entries, she reflected on the memories they recalled and used newer entries to follow up on older stories or to add information and detail. Similarly, if an earlier entry mentioned a relative or friend who had not been fully described in the diary, she provided in a new entry a complete character sketch. Occasionally, she seems to address her two sons directly. In one such entry, she writes,

It has just occurred to me that when my sons read this journal after I am dead, if they ever do, they may possibly be inclined to blame their father for not telling me before our marriage that he was subject to recurrent constitutional melancholia. I do not want them to do this, I have never done so.³¹

In 1922, after allowing that her heirs might publish the diaries, Montgomery begins to refer not only to her descendants but also to her “readers.” On a train trip to Saskatchewan, for example, she records that she bought “a magazine and a box of [her] favorite candy (pecan roll, for the information

28 Montgomery, *The Selected Journals: Volume II*, 202.

29 *Ibid.*, 369.

30 *Ibid.*, 395.

31 Montgomery, *The Selected Journals: Volume III*, 115.

of readers two hundred years hence!).³² Montgomery scholars have understood these periodic references to readers and Montgomery's concession to the future publication of her journals as evidence that she intended her journals to become the public record of her life. Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston argue that as Montgomery "became an increasingly public person, she needed more than ever a secret release for her thoughts."³³ However, they also acknowledge that Montgomery eventually came to "think of her handwritten journals as documents that would be read by posterity."³⁴ Margaret E. Turner finds in the journals the "articulation" of a deliberate "separation of [Montgomery's] public and private lives,"³⁵ but believes that Montgomery nevertheless conceived of them as an essentially public record. The fact that she intended them to be made public only after her death allowed her to reveal a more representative self to her eventual readers; Turner argues that Montgomery "recognized with clarity and irony" that her image as a popular writer and minister's wife "was not the whole of L.M. Montgomery" and suggests that, by confining her "heretical statements" to her diaries, Montgomery kept herself "safe during her own lifetime" while still allowing for the possibility that someday readers would know her better.³⁶

Cecily Devereux also remarks on the ways in which Montgomery addresses a future public in her diaries. Montgomery, Devereux argues, exploits the "paradoxical nature" of the diary genre, "addressing the reader while appearing to address only herself" and "making private revelations while editing and preparing the text for publication."³⁷ Devereux views the diaries as a means by which Montgomery was able to control the public's perception of her and of her fiction after her death. She reminds us that Montgomery destroyed the early versions of her diary after she had copied them and that she was known to have "regularly burned letters and papers."³⁸ In so doing, Montgomery

32 Ibid., 112.

33 Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston, "Introduction," in L.M. Montgomery, *The Selected Journals of L.M. Montgomery: Volume II*, ed. Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), xi.

34 Ibid., xx.

35 Margaret E. Turner, "'I Mean to Try, As Far As in Me Lies, to Paint My Life and Deeds Truthfully': Autobiographical Process in the L.M. Montgomery Journals," in *Harvesting Thistles: The Textual Garden of L.M. Montgomery*, ed. Mary Henley Rubio (Guelph, ON: Canadian Children's Press, 1994), 93.

36 Ibid., 98.

37 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*, ed. Irene Gammel (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 247.

38 Ibid., 245. Stuart MacDonald, Montgomery's son and literary executor, revealed to Mary Rubio that during Montgomery's last years she burned a large quantity of papers that she considered unimportant. See Rubio and Waterston, "Introduction," in L.M. Montgomery, *The Selected Journals: Volume I*, xxiv. In her journals, Montgomery frequently refers to

ensured that only what she consciously preserved would survive to represent her posthumously.

According to this view, Montgomery used her journal not only as an outlet in times of need, but also as a means of establishing a record of her life written from her own point of view. In the diaries, Montgomery frequently scoffs at biographers and critics who “generally imagine a good deal of nonsense”;³⁹ by keeping her journal, Montgomery may have been hoping to circumvent biographers who would try to tell her story for her. In a letter to Ephraim Weber, she rejects his offer to write her biography and insists that “nobody shall.... Biography,” she claims, “is a *screaming farce*. No man or woman was ever truly depicted.”⁴⁰

Devereux calls attention also to a codicil to Montgomery’s will in which she lists items to be inherited by her son Chester.⁴¹ In the codicil, Montgomery advises him to consult her journal for the “full story” of various items on the list. Devereux argues that these instructions indicate that Montgomery “wanted her journals to be seen as truthful and accurate sources of information on certain aspects of her life.”⁴² In a letter to her friend G.B. MacMillan, Montgomery similarly suggests that the diary contains the truth on certain matters. Referring to the lawsuit she brought against the publishers of *Anne of Green Gables* after they published a book against her wishes, she writes,

When the suit is finally wound up I will write a special letter telling the whole weird tale and I’ll send you a copy of the book as well. It may well be valuable as a “curiosity” in a generation or so, when my “diary” is published with a full account of the whole transaction. So hang on to it when you get it!!!⁴³

Following her stated intention that her journals be published eventually, Montgomery often seems to use the diary not only as a means of establishing a record of her life, but also as a means of setting the record straight. In the 1930s, she begins to be bothered by an overly affectionate and demanding fan, who lives nearby and whom she initially befriends, but who begins to disturb and upset her. As she grows increasingly concerned about the woman’s behaviour, Montgomery starts to transcribe in the journal the letters she receives

burning old letters and papers, especially during the late 1930s.

39 Montgomery, *The Selected Journals: Volume III*, 217.

40 L.M. Montgomery, letter dated 10 November 1907, in *The Green Gables Letters*, ed. Wilfrid Eggleston (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1960), 58–59.

41 University of Guelph Library, Archival and Special Collections, L.M. Montgomery Collection, XZ1 MS A098008, L.M. Montgomery, codicil to her will (copy), 24 June 1941.

42 Devereux, ““See My Journal for the Full Story,”” 241.

43 L.M. Montgomery, letter dated 29 August 1926, in *My Dear Mr. M: Letters to G.B. MacMillan from L.M. Montgomery Author of Anne of Green Gables*, ed. Francis W.P. Bolger and Elizabeth R. Epperly (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1980), 125.

from her as well as her own replies “as proof to my descendents that I have not exaggerated my problems.”⁴⁴ Similarly, her accounts about the reasons her husband felt he had to leave the ministry in Norval read like testimony submitted as evidence in court.⁴⁵

Montgomery also begins to treat her diary as a repository for a variety of documents and mementoes that she wishes to keep forever. In the same entry in which she gives permission for her heirs to publish the journals, she adds,

*I desire that these journals never be destroyed but kept as long as the leaves hold together. I leave this to my descendents or my literary heirs as a sacred charge and invoke a Shakespearean curse on them if they disregard it. There is so much of myself in these volumes that I cannot bear the thought of their ever being destroyed. It would seem to me like a kind of murder.*⁴⁶

Having stated her determination to see the diary preserved, Montgomery begins to add to it other records and souvenirs she has saved. Her habit of using the journal for preservation purposes increased in the last few years of her life, and she filled the journal with cards, letters, and photographs she found as she rummaged through boxes in her attic or that she removed from the several scrapbooks she had kept since she was a teenager. Montgomery’s practice of saving special items within the pages of the journal volumes, combined with her tendency to burn other types of documents, strongly suggests that she intended the journal to stand as the definitive record of her life, the “book of the self” that preserves her image on her own terms.

What, then, was the image Montgomery portrayed of herself in her diary? Certainly, Montgomery appears to have revealed in her journals a much darker side of herself than she let show in her daily life. In fact, Montgomery acknowledges in the journal the differences between how others see her and how she sees herself. As early as 1903, five years before the publication of *Anne of Green Gables*, Montgomery remarks, “To those around me, even my most intimate friends, I am known as a ‘very joly [*sic*] girl’, seemingly always light-hearted ‘good company’ and ‘always in good spirits.’ It makes me laugh rather bitterly to hear people say this.” Montgomery vowed not to let her

44 Montgomery, *The Selected Journals: Volume IV*, 164. In the published version of the diary, a number of these transcriptions are redacted or omitted entirely; the original diaries include many long entries detailing Montgomery’s problems with this friend. See L.M. Montgomery Collection, XZ5 MS A001.

45 See, for example, Montgomery, *The Selected Journals: Volume III*, 253–55. Montgomery was quite familiar with court proceedings, having participated as a witness in the many trials involving the L.C. Page Company, publisher of *Anne of Green Gables*, and having observed proceedings against her husband in a local court after a car accident in which he was involved.

46 Montgomery, *The Selected Journals: Volume III*, 51.

darker side show, not wanting to be pitied by anyone, and was grateful to her journal for serving as the “one outlet for [her] dark moods,” the depository for “the bitterness which might otherwise overflow and poison other lives.”⁴⁷ As mentioned above, Montgomery initially valued the privacy of the diary, and even as she began to conceive of it as a more lasting record of her life, she continued to refer to it as her “grumble book,” and found comfort and relief in pouring out troubles she felt she could not share with anyone she knew in her family or public life.

At times, Montgomery worried that her habit of treating the journal as “the refuge of [her] sick spirit”⁴⁸ engendered a lopsided view of her personality, “all moans and groans” and no “summer pleasantness,”⁴⁹ but at other times she suggests that the journals provided the “only key” to the “real *me*.”⁵⁰ The reactions to the publication of her diaries of those who knew Montgomery in person or by reputation – and Montgomery’s own acknowledgement of the imbalances evident in her own depictions of herself and her moods – speak to the kinds of difficulties involved in determining the degree of correspondence between what Smith and Watson call the “‘real’ or historical ‘I’” and the “narrated I.” We may be tempted to accept Montgomery’s assertion that the “real *me*” is the textual “me” narrated in the diary. However, if the journal does contain the key to the “real” Montgomery, readers continue to encounter in it many locked and barred doors. If the journal permits Montgomery to reveal a side of herself she felt unable to show during her lifetime, it also, conversely, allows her to conceal as much as she chooses, and such concealment is a marked feature of the diaries. Several Montgomery scholars, for example, have remarked on her silence around what seem to be extremely significant events in her life. She makes almost no reference to *Anne of Green Gables* before it is accepted finally for publication, and does not introduce Ewan Madonald as her fiancé until several years after their courtship has begun. Her omissions become much more marked in the 1920s and 1930s, after she has decided that the journals should be preserved and possibly even published after her death; although she continues to find relief through “grumbling” in the journal, there are limits to what she will confess, and she begins referring only obliquely to certain types of problems. For example, on 22 July 1928, Montgomery mentions “something nasty and worrying” of which there is “no use to write much about.”⁵¹ Entries such as this one increase in frequency, and by the mid-1930s phrases such as “It is too cruel and hideous

47 Montgomery, *The Selected Journals: Volume I*, 287.

48 Montgomery, *The Selected Journals: Volume II*, 1.

49 Montgomery, *The Selected Journals: Volume I*, 307.

50 Ibid.

51 Montgomery, *The Selected Journals: Volume III*, 372.

and unexpected to write about"⁵² and "I can't write it"⁵³ punctuate many, if not most, of the entries. Words she scribbles in the diary very near the end of her life highlight her efforts to conceal the "truth" of her life and confirm the elusiveness of the "real" Montgomery: "Nobody dreams what my awful position is."⁵⁴

Throughout my discussion of Montgomery's diary writing, I have focused on the extent to which the journal might be understood as private text or public record, arguing that its status changed over time; what was initially intended as a completely private text to be seen only by its author was later reconfigured as a type of public testimony and literary record, as Montgomery's "book of the self," and as a sort of posthumous address to future readers of both her fiction and her life. Readers of Montgomery's journals may wonder why she would wish to leave as her legacy such a dismal record. Addressing this question, Janice Fiamengo considers the discourse of depression as a "representational strategy." She suggests that while "Montgomery's suffering was a lived experience," in her journal it also became an "enabling fiction, a trope of self-presence and authenticity." Fiamengo observes how Montgomery was comforted by the thought that her true self was hidden from her friends and neighbours and could only be found in the journal. She "took pride in the depths of her reserve," believing that her ability to keep her troubles secret signalled her "complexity and multi-facetedness." Recognizing the somewhat false role she often had to play in public, Montgomery began to view the depression in her journal as the "guarantor of the real."⁵⁵

Fiamengo further suggests that "in addition to marking the 'real *me*' of the journals, depression came to signal artistic creativity." Montgomery adhered to the romantic belief that great genius and talent come at a price, and her anxiety and nervous suffering differentiated her from non-writers and those with less imagination and appreciation for beauty.⁵⁶ Fiamengo concludes that by employing the discourse of depression as a representational strategy, Montgomery was able to create a "compelling and troubling personal myth."⁵⁷ Fiamengo's argument repeats Sidonie Smith's observation that interiority is performed;⁵⁸ Montgomery's "secret self" is as much created through the writing of her journals as it is reflected in them. Although Montgomery's secret suffering may

52 Montgomery, *The Selected Journals: Volume IV*, 214.

53 Montgomery, *The Selected Journals: Volume V*, 111.

54 *Ibid.*, 350.

55 Janice Fiamengo, "'...the Refuge of My Sick Spirit...': L.M. Montgomery and the Shadows of Depression," in *The Intimate Life of L.M. Montgomery*, ed. Irene Gammel (Toronto, Buffalo, NY, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 180–81.

56 *Ibid.*, 181.

57 *Ibid.*, 184.

58 Smith, "Performativity, Autobiographical Practice, Resistance."

have caused her to need an outlet, the text she creates as she unburdens herself simultaneously creates a secret and suffering "I" that lives only in the journals.

The secret "I" that lives only in the journals is analogous to the "narrated 'I'" in Smith and Watson's taxonomy: the "I" that is the result of the "narrating 'I'"s self-selection and representational strategies. In many ways, though, Montgomery's acts of self-selection and -representation are more complicated than those of a "narrating 'I.'" Although Montgomery is narrating a life story through the crafting and writing of her diary entries, she is also using the diary as a repository for other types of life-writing texts and personal mementoes: letters she has written or received, photographs of places and people that have been important to her, family histories, etc. This type of gathering together is analogous to the acts of selection and retention that shape an archive, and in essence, what Montgomery is doing with her "book of the self" is creating the archive that will stand beside her works of fiction (and other writing) as her legacy and monument. This is the archiving "I" at work, copying the journals, copying or pasting into them other material, and destroying the original diaries as well as other letters and papers. Through these actions, we see the archiving "I" making decisions about how the "'real' or historical 'I'" will be represented in the archive, and making efforts to control her posthumous reception.

Just as diary scholars have tended to view a diary written specifically to be published or read as less sincere than one understood to have been written in the expectation of complete privacy, archivists have tended to view the consciously constructed archive as tainted and untrustworthy. Hilary Jenkinson, the forefather of English-language archival theory, identified "impartiality" as one of the most important features and values of archives. To be impartial, a document must have been created as part of the ordinary course of business or administration; as a natural by-product of regular activity, the document is, according to Jenkinson, therefore, "free from the suspicion of prejudice in regard to the interests in which we now use them." Only documents created in this manner can form a trustworthy archive. Documents created "in the interest or for the information of Posterity," on the other hand, can never be accorded the same status.⁵⁹

This point of view, however, has been challenged on several levels in recent years. Adrian Cunningham argues that "all records are purposeful," and that many are "consciously created for audiences" – for an "outside reader" – that may or may not be "immediately apparent" to subsequent readers. Cunningham argues that a creator's awareness of posterity does not "devalue" the "recordness" of his records, and suggests that the posterity dimension of

59 Hilary Jenkinson, *A Manual for Archive Administration*, 2nd ed. (London: Percy Lund, Humphries & Co., 1937), 11–12. See also Terry Eastwood, "What Is Archival Theory and Why Is It Important?" *Archivaria* 37 (Spring 1994): 127.

personal archives in particular highlights the importance of the preservation of an archive's context, which is the goal of all archivists: only when records are preserved in their full recordkeeping context can researchers make informed decisions about their interpretation.⁶⁰ It is with this emphasis on recordkeeping context in mind that I suggest that archivists begin to pay more attention to the work of the archiving "I" and to its effect on the nature of the archived "I." In the following sections, I turn to the archives of several other writers to study how the archiving "I" has shaped them.

The Archiving "I" at Work

In an article published in the *Globe and Mail* in November 1984 and titled "A Plea to Stop Turning the Knobs on Writers' Closets," Marian Engel declares, "As a writer who has sold her papers, I hope to be found uninteresting until I've been dead as long as Boswell."⁶¹ The article was published not long after Engel had sold her archive to McMaster University, and it reveals her concerns about how the material within it might be read. In particular, Engel objects to the type of psychological criticism of literary works that seemed to her to inevitably occur when critics have access to more private or personal papers. Engel resents the idea of graduate students attempting to "dig ... out" her neuroses in her archive, and fervently wishes that writers could be known entirely by their published works. At the same time, Engel warns that the graduate student or researcher who does go "digging" in her papers will not find what she is looking for; "I'm not telling," Engel avers, knowing she has done what she could to keep the personal out of her archive.

Margaret Laurence, Engel's fellow writer and colleague in the Writers' Union of Canada, wrote to her after the article appeared:

I, too, have sold my papers and will continue to do so, but with very stringent conditions attached re: access to letters to and from other writers. I sure as hell don't want M.A. students poking around, even though in fact all the letters are innocuous. I sorted through them very carefully and took out any that were of a too personal nature. I agree totally ... I would rather have people read my work than be entertained by me in person or pore over the details of my life, which has actually been pretty sedate, when I come to think of it, although it has always seemed very dramatic to me. A good article yours.⁶²

60 Cunningham, "The Mysterious Outside Reader," 133–34.

61 Quoted in Christl Verduyn, "Personal Papers: Putting Lives on the Line – Working with the Marian Engel Archive," in *Working in Women's Archives: Researching Women's Private Literature and Archival Documents*, ed. Helen M. Buss and Marlene Kadar (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001), 91.

62 McMaster University, William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, Marian Engel Fonds, second accrual, box 31, file 55, Margaret Laurence, letter to Marian

In this passage, Laurence claims her power over the “M.A. students” who wish to “pok[e] around” in her life, describing the ways in which she controls what they can see. In the archives I studied, this seems to be one of the most common ways for the archiving “I” to operate: cleansing the archive of its more personal elements by carefully controlling what enters it. Throughout Laurence’s archive – and in her published correspondence – there are references to her attempts to ensure that the letters to be included in the archive could be described as “innocuous.” In one letter to her close friend Adele Wiseman, Laurence signals her awareness of the archive and of her letter’s eventual fate, writing,

Cognizant, old buddy, of my numerous lengthy phone calls to you..and cognizant (I like that word) of not only the \$\$\$ but also taking up hundreds of hours of your time.. and cognizant (hem hem) of the fact that we neglect the..you should excuse the dreadful word..archives, I am herewith writing, not phoning, how’s that for preamble?⁶³

Knowing that the letters she wrote to her literary colleagues and friends would likely end up in an archive, Laurence was careful to conceal certain details.⁶⁴ In another letter to Wiseman, Laurence writes, “It amuses me to think of code ways (so to speak) of saying some things. If anything at all is left by the time you and I depart this vale of tears, it may amuse some student or researcher to try to unlock the meaning (ha ha..just let’em try!)”⁶⁵

Although Laurence adopts a cavalier tone in these remarks to Wiseman, her correspondence with Al Purdy shows her to be, initially at least, fairly anxious about her letters being made publicly available. In a letter to Purdy dated 11 December 1967, Laurence adds as postscript:

p.s.2. probably unjustified curiosity, but why do you put Margaret Laurence at the top of your letters to me? Do you make carbons and stash them all away? I hope to Christ nobody keeps my letters to them – they are not for keeping.⁶⁶

Engel, 17 November 1984. Laurence kept a carbon copy of the letter as part of her own papers, which can now be found in York University, Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, Margaret Laurence Fonds, box 1986-006/004, file 143.

63 York University, Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections, Margaret Laurence Fonds, box 1986-006/007, file 298a, Margaret Laurence, letter to Adele Wiseman (carbon copy), 20 March 1985. Ellipses are in original letter and do not indicate omissions; a particular trait of Laurence’s typewriting was to use two-dot ellipses.

64 The published and unpublished correspondence between Laurence and Wiseman, as well as between Laurence and Clara Thomas, suggest also that numerous letters were destroyed to ensure they would never find their way into their archive.

65 Margaret Laurence Fonds, box 1982-002/004, file 69, Margaret Laurence, letter to Adele Wiseman (carbon copy), 27 April 1981.

66 Margaret Laurence, letter to Al Purdy, 11 December 1967, in *Margaret Laurence – Al Purdy: A Friendship in Letters: Selected Correspondence*, ed. John Lennox (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993), 77.

In her next letter, written after Purdy has explained that he saves all the letters he receives to eventually “peddle them to a univ.,”⁶⁷ Laurence jokingly includes a full reference in the top left-hand corner: “*TO: AL W. PURDY/ REF: ML/ Elmcott/ 1/ 68.*” She also includes the following comments:

I feel kind of like a louse about the comment I made to you in my last letter about letters. It was only after I had posted my letter that I realized the remark sounded churlish, although I didn't mean it to. No, don't return my letters – I am not concerned about them, and if you can ever flog them to a university, more power to you – have a drink for me. Actually, I keep my friends' letters when they're about writing, too, because I like to look back from time to time and read about other writers' problems and comments on my work, especially if I am feeling low myself. I suppose when I last wrote to you I was probably in a phase of thinking what a lot of drivel I was writing, in novel, etc., but it was only a phase. That is the only trouble with letters – you write some remark like that, and next day you feel differently. I think, also, that I tend to fight the current tendency of many people (especially academics) to be more interested in a writer's methods and personal life than in the writing itself, so I don't really like to believe that any university would want my letters – I want to shout in fury, “Read my goddamn books and never mind the scribblings on the margins of old manuscripts.”⁶⁸

Despite its reassurances to Purdy that he can keep her letters, the passage reveals Laurence's reservations, and in her letters to Purdy over the following several years, she continues to probe at his intentions. In October 1969, she asks him not to sell “or even give away” her letters until after she is dead,⁶⁹ and in February 1970, Purdy writes her a note apparently in response to a phone call from Laurence in which she had expressed great anxiety over the fate of the letters.

Although she remains uncomfortable at the prospect of “future students or gossips or whatever” reading her private correspondence, Laurence eventually comes around to Purdy's way of thinking and begins to carefully set aside all of his letters to her, envisioning a collection of their letters that could be published at a much later date. She jokes in different letters about particular passages and how they will be read by academics, and suggests parts of letters that might be cited in the introduction to an eventual collection. In July 1980, she writes to Purdy to tell him that she has recently gone through all her papers and has put a large number of them on deposit at York University.⁷⁰

67 Al Purdy, letter to Margaret Laurence, 31 December 1967, in *Margaret Laurence – Al Purdy*, 78.

68 Margaret Laurence, letter to Al Purdy, 5 January 1968, in *Margaret Laurence – Al Purdy*, 81.

69 Margaret Laurence, letter to Al Purdy, October 1969, in *Margaret Laurence – Al Purdy*, 159.

70 Margaret Laurence, letter to Al Purdy, 24 July 1980, in *Margaret Laurence – Al Purdy*, 365.

Laurence’s attitude is interesting for its simultaneous recognition of the value of her literary papers and its revulsion at the idea of people actually reading many of them. As she indicated to Engel in her letter (quoted above), Laurence was careful to remove anything “that seemed of a too personal nature”⁷¹ prior to depositing at York University, and she imposed strict access conditions on the papers, particularly on the files of letters from and to other writers. In her case, then, it is not hard to see the archiving “I” at work, shaping the archive she feels comfortable leaving behind. As she works with York on the deposit of her papers, she becomes savvier about the process of donating and about the business side of doing so. She explains to Purdy how the archivist at York informed her that the letters she had from other writers were not worth nearly as much as they would have been had she kept copies of her letters to them. She commends Purdy on his foresight and advises him to continue his practice of making and saving carbons, showing herself to have moved beyond her fear of exposure to an awareness of her power and control over the process and the outcome of building her archive.

In the literature on personal archives, little attention has been paid to the knowing and controlling role of the donor, but in the archives examined for this project, that role is almost always evident. Like Laurence and Engel, Margaret Atwood and Alice Munro have both made efforts to keep more personal material out of their archives. In *Reading In: Alice Munro’s Archives*, JoAnn McCaig describes the “two filtering processes” by which the archive that now sits at the University of Calgary Library Special Collections and Archives has been shaped:

First, the Munro collection was edited and selected by the author herself. Munro was very careful to include only documents pertaining to the business of writing; there are no personal letters or journals or diaries in the collection. The second filter was provided by the archival staff who catalogued the material. One library staff member I spoke to explained that the contract obliges the removal or restriction of any financial or extremely personal information unearthed in the cataloguing process.⁷²

Two of the archivists involved in the acquisition and processing of Munro’s archives, Appollonia Steele and Jean Tener, suggested to me that McCaig overstated the formality of the “filtering processes” she describes, but they acknowledge that Munro has allowed very little personal material into the fonds at the University of Calgary and accept that this is the prerogative of the donor. As Steele says, “There’s no doubt [the donor] can say, this is what I’m

71 Ibid.

72 JoAnn McCaig, *Reading In: Alice Munro’s Archives* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2002), xiii. In fact, there are personal letters in the Alice Munro Fonds, but these have been restricted by Munro during the lifetimes of her correspondents.

sending, this what I'm not sending, regardless of what we say in our agreement with them ... or [what material] we believe should be included."⁷³

Margaret Atwood has personal assistants who maintain a somewhat ad hoc office recordkeeping system and prepare files they no longer need for transfer to the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto. According to John Shoesmith, the archivist responsible for processing recent accessions to Atwood's archives, there are some kinds of materials that Atwood and her assistants will "never give us," especially those related to financial matters and contracts. "That stuff never, ever comes through our doors," he stresses. Like Munro, Atwood has also chosen to restrict the amount of personal material she donates. "Atwood," Shoesmith explains, "is very clear about making sure that she doesn't have any – or not too much – personal [material in her collection]," and she is very protective of her family and friends. Recently, Shoesmith received an accrual that included approximately four hundred letters Atwood had written to her parents "from about 1950 and then through her years in university and up until her mother died." At first, Shoesmith wondered whether Atwood would actually want the letters to be made publicly accessible, knowing (and respecting) her reticence, but after reading through the letters he realized they were not very personal after all: "She withheld a lot; she's writing to her parents,"⁷⁴ he explained. Jennifer Toews, the librarian with responsibility for Personal and Literary Papers at the Fisher Library, understands Atwood's efforts to control what does or does not make it into the archive: "She's a woman of her generation and she's had to fight a lot of battles, and [has had people say to her], you're this, you're that. She's used to being misinterpreted, so I don't blame her for being so private."⁷⁵

In the correspondence between Atwood and two of her biographers, Rosemary Sullivan and Nathalie Cooke,⁷⁶ we sense Atwood's resistance to a psychological or autobiographical reading of her archive. Atwood writes to Sullivan, warning her to be careful about what she assumes about Atwood's character based on what she finds in the papers: "I'm the expert on me. You're the expert on you ... I am familiar with my daily habits. You are not familiar with them."⁷⁷ Atwood objects to what she sees as Sullivan's dependence on letters exchanged between her and artist Charlie Pachter for Sullivan's depiction of Atwood's state of mind during the mid-1960s to early 1970s. In an

73 Appollonia Steele and Jean Tener, interview by author, digital recording, Calgary, 9 July 2010.

74 John Shoesmith, interview by author, digital recording, Toronto, 27 August 2010.

75 Jennifer Toews, interview by author, digital recording, Toronto, 10 May 2010.

76 Rosemary Sullivan wrote the best-selling biography of Atwood's early years, *The Red Shoes: Margaret Atwood Starting Out* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1998). Cooke's book was not completed.

77 University of Toronto, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, Margaret Atwood Collection, MSS 335, box 93, folder 2, Margaret Atwood, letter to Rosemary Sullivan (copy), 10 March 1998,

email, Atwood reminds Sullivan that “his are the letters you HAVE, but they sure ain’t all the letters I wrote,”⁷⁸ implying her awareness of what she has and has not included in the archive.

In the Montgomery, Engel, Laurence, Munro, and Atwood archives, there are clear indications that their creators made efforts to shape the archive and to conceal aspects of their personal lives, that they were aware of the archive and its public status and were making conscious decisions about what to include and exclude from it. This work of the archiving “I” makes it difficult to assess the extent to which an archive is reflective of the character or personality of its creator if the archive is cleansed of personal information or, as with Montgomery’s, serves mostly to highlight the incongruity of the various versions of its creator’s life. Unlike Laurence, Atwood, and the others, Douglas Coupland appears to have been less concerned about what people might find in his archives.⁷⁹ As Sarah Romkey, then archivist at Rare Books and Special Collections at the University of British Columbia, explained, “There [has been] very little, if any, self-censoring” on Coupland’s part. In fact, when archives staff asked Coupland “if he had any privacy concerns about some subjects, like prescriptions, personal relationships, etc.,” he replied, “But isn’t that what people are interested in?”⁸⁰ The Douglas Coupland Fonds consists of more than one hundred boxes of diverse materials,⁸¹ including drafts of novels, short stories, and works of non-fiction; visual artworks and materials; fan mail; promotional material; personal and administrative correspondence; research materials; and notebooks. The fonds also contains a considerable amount of personal ephemera, including to-do lists, doodles, grocery lists, and receipts, airline boarding passes, movie and concert ticket stubs, and short notes to his partner, David Weir, whom he calls Glü.

Some of these many items do tell us something about the kind of person their creator might be. From packing lists for reading tours, we learn what types of clothing Coupland favours and what sorts of medications he takes.⁸² The many notes to Weir, or Glü, provide details of their domestic life together,⁸³ while notes from friends addressed to Weir and Coupland suggest that the

78 Ibid.

79 The Douglas Coupland Fonds is also discussed in Jennifer Douglas, “Original Order, Added Value? Archival Theory and the Douglas Coupland Fonds,” in *The Boundaries of the Literary Archive: Reclamation and Representation*, ed. Carrie Smith and Lisa Stead (London: Ashgate, 2013); and Jennifer Douglas, “What We Talk About When We Talk About Original Order in Writers’ Archives,” *Archivaria* 76 (Fall 2013): 7–25.

80 Sarah Romkey, personal email to the author, 24 March 2010. Quoted with permission.

81 At the time I conducted my research, only the first accession of Coupland’s fonds had been processed. As of November 2014, a second accession has been processed and made available to researchers.

82 University of British Columbia, Rare Books and Special Collections, Douglas Coupland Fonds, box 5, file 5, packing list, [ca. 2007].

83 See, for example, notes in box 6, file 1 of Douglas Coupland Fonds.

two enjoy a busy and satisfying social life. The movie and concert ticket stubs, along with the grocery lists and restaurant receipts, might tell us something about Coupland's tastes in food and entertainment.

However, it is not always apparent who went to which movie or ate which meal. Numerous items included in the fonds are addressed to Weir, and it is clear that, to some extent at least, the records of the two men have become intermingled. In some cases, it is difficult to say whose records are whose and, as a result, equally difficult to determine how or what they evidence about their creator. However, even when it is clear that records were created by Coupland, it is not easy to infer his character or psychology. The Douglas Coupland Fonds is a testament to Coupland's diverse interests and immersion in pop culture, to his ability to work on numerous creative projects at a time, and to his public role as artist and writer. However, in many ways, the "multiple but scattered pieces of personal writing and ephemera remain largely inscrutable."⁸⁴ Marian Engel wrote in several different notebooks (which she referred to as *cahiers*) at any given time, so that the little personal details that are recorded are difficult for the researcher to piece together, to order and interpret. In one *cahier* she writes, "Scrambled journals indeed – always untraceable."⁸⁵ The Douglas Coupland Fonds feels similarly "untraceable." Faced with the abundance of dispersed and miscellaneous receipts, notes, ticket stubs, and other personal ephemera, how does the researcher piece together a story, or determine with any certainty what these pieces reveal about Coupland as a writer, artist, or man?

Coaxers and Coercers

Coupland's role as archiving "I" seems to be a relatively passive one; papers accrued in folders and boxes until eventually Coupland determined to try to find a permanent home for them. Material in the accession file for Coupland's fonds, however, suggests that it was not Coupland, but rather Weir, who prepared the boxes for transfer. The box list that accompanied the first accession includes a handwritten note signed "David Weir," and throughout the list Coupland is referred to in the third person.⁸⁶ In this case, then, some of the work of the archiving "I" may have been undertaken not by Coupland but by Weir. In the literature on personal archives, there is a tendency to perceive

84 Douglas, "Original Order, Added Value."

85 Marian Engel Fonds, first accession, box 6, file 8, Marian Engel, notebook titled "III," "Collections from Other Cahiers. Very Important," [1963–1964].

86 The packing-box list for the Douglas Coupland material and the accompanying notes were made available to me by the staff at Rare Books and Special Collections, University of British Columbia. They are part of the accession file for the Douglas Coupland Fonds and are available to researchers upon request.

the creator of personal records as working in solitude.⁸⁷ However, if we look to Coupland’s archive – and to the other archives cited here – we can observe that, while the creation of particular documents within the archive might be understood as having taken place in a more or less individual context, the formation of the archive itself often involves the participation of individuals other than the writer; although it is difficult to know the extent of Weir’s involvement in the formation of the Coupland fonds, it is nevertheless clear that he had a helping hand.

Weir might be viewed as a “coaxer” in the formation of the Douglas Coupland Fonds. This prompting or provoking role is seen in many of the other archives discussed here. As explained in “Arranging the Self,” there is significant evidence of the impact of coaxers and coercers in the Alice Munro Fonds, with Munro’s agent, Virginia Barber, playing an influential role in negotiations between Munro and the University of Calgary.⁸⁸ The impact of coaxers is also felt in the archives of Marian Engel. Engel sold her papers to McMaster University in 1982. In September 1977, she had received a letter from chief librarian Robert Brandeis at Victoria University in the University of Toronto in which he suggested that “the time might be propitious for [her] to start selling some manuscripts and papers.”⁸⁹ At around the same time, Engel was a member of the Archives Committee of the Writers’ Union of Canada and worked with Robin Skelton to survey Canadian writers to determine what provisions (if any) they had made for the disposal of their papers and to collect and distribute to writers information about who acquired papers, how much they paid, and what types of negotiations were involved.⁹⁰ Engel evidently had some idea of how much her papers might be worth, and although her letter in response to Brandeis’s suggestion is not included in the fonds, in his next extant letter to her, he exclaims, “I only wish I had \$25,000 to offer you for your papers, but I don’t even have \$2,500.”⁹¹ By November 1982, the Division of Archives and Research Collections at McMaster University was prepared to offer Engel \$25,000, on the condition that she include two series of letters from her friend Pauline McGibbon, former lieutenant governor of Ontario, and author Hugh McLennan. Although Engel had misgivings about selling her more personal papers, as a single mother with a terminal illness and a small writing income, the prospect of benefitting financially from the sale helped

87 See, for example, Stephen Ennis, “In the Author’s Hand: Artifacts of Origin and Twentieth-Century Reading Practice,” *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts and Cultural Heritage* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2001): 106–20.

88 Douglas and MacNeil, “Arranging the Self,” 38.

89 Marian Engel Fonds, second accession, box 1, file 39, Bob Brandeis, letter to Marian Engel, 12 September 1977.

90 See Marian Engel Fonds, second accession, box 32, file 2.

91 Marian Engel Fonds, second accession, box 1, file 39, Bob Brandeis, letter to Marian Engel, 3 April 1978.

soothe some of her discomfort; in one of her many notebooks, Engel notes that “a cheque for \$25,000 is therapeutic.”⁹²

After Engel’s death in 1984, Brandeis became literary executor of her estate. A file included in the second accrual of her papers and titled “Estate Correspondence” contains letters sent from Michael Kainer of Sack, Charney, Goldblatt and Mitchell, Barristers and Solicitors, to Brandeis and others in which he inquires about the sale of the remainder of Engel’s papers to McMaster.⁹³ Eventually, the papers were transferred to the university; the second accrual contains many more personal letters to friends and other writers than the first, as well as a number of notebooks that Engel had apparently withheld from the first accession and that, in some cases, contain much more personal information than do those that were sold initially. As with the Virginia Barber correspondence in the Alice Munro Fonds, the estate correspondence in the Marian Engel Fonds alerts researchers to intentions and actions other than Engel’s that have contributed to the shaping of her archive.

An interesting case of coaxers’ and coercers’ involvement as literary executors and family members is that of the Sylvia Plath archive. Split between two repositories in the United States, at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, and at the University of Indiana in Bloomington, the archive consists of Plath’s journals, drafts of poems, articles, and bits of novels, personal and professional correspondence, scrapbooks, juvenilia, and more. After Plath’s suicide in 1963, her estranged husband, Ted Hughes, Hughes’s sister, Olwyn Hughes, who became Plath’s literary executor, and her mother, Aurelia Plath, engaged in a lengthy battle over the materials she left behind and control of her posthumous image.

Plath died when she was only thirty-one. Her critically acclaimed book of poetry, *Ariel*, was not published in her lifetime, and her novel, *The Bell Jar*, had been published under a pseudonym. The success of the posthumous publication of *Ariel* drew attention to Plath’s earlier works, and once details about the nature of her death began to circulate, interest in both her work and her personal life grew. At the time of her death, she and Hughes were living separately but had not yet divorced. Since Plath died intestate, Hughes was automatically named her literary executor and took possession of the papers in her London flat and those that remained in the house they had shared before their separation.

Hughes is widely criticized for his handling of the unpublished material Plath left behind. In his foreword to *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*, Hughes admits to destroying Plath’s final journal because he “did not want her children

92 Marian Engel Fonds, second accession, box 34, file 11, Marian Engel, [dark green notebook], [ca. 1982–1983].

93 See Marian Engel Fonds, second accession, box 32, file 12.

to have to read it,” and he explains that another journal, written immediately before the last, “disappeared.”⁹⁴ Because of his actions, scholars have been left without access to the journals Plath wrote between 1959 and 1963, the period during which she and Hughes returned to England, their two children were born, their marriage disintegrated, and Plath’s best poems were written. The handling of Plath’s unpublished material after her death⁹⁵ is the subject of a chapter titled “The Archive”⁹⁶ in Jacqueline Rose’s book *The Haunting of Sylvia Plath*. Rose describes Hughes as an “editing, controlling and censoring presence which one encounters, of necessity, as soon as one even attempts to approach the body of Plath’s work.”⁹⁷ Like many other Plath scholars, Rose accuses Hughes of attempting to control the ways in which Plath’s work and life can be interpreted; however, she also acknowledges that Hughes is not the only person who tries to do so. Plath’s mother and Hughes’s sister, who eventually took over her brother’s position as literary executor, have also assumed controlling roles with regard to Plath’s reception and reputation. Rose believes that Aurelia Plath’s publication of the letters Plath sent home to her over several years⁹⁸ was intended as a “corrective”⁹⁹ to the image of Plath in circulation after her death and the publication of *The Bell Jar* and *Ariel*. Aurelia Plath edited her daughter’s correspondence by omitting letters, removing parts of others, and inserting notes to instruct and guide the reader. As Rose notes, Aurelia Plath promotes a “specific image” of her daughter, and her omissions and annotations shape the “body” and “psyche” presented.¹⁰⁰ Aurelia Plath used the opportunity that the publication of *Letters Home* provided to portray Plath as a loving, dutiful daughter, who, contrary to her reputation as a sort of high priestess of suicides, had a sunny disposition and was capable of great highs as well as the great lows for which she had become more known.¹⁰¹

In the same way that she understands *Letters Home* as a “corrective” to the image of Plath circulating after publication of *The Bell Jar* and *Ariel*, Rose

94 Ted Hughes, “Foreword,” in *The Journals of Sylvia Plath*, ed. Ted Hughes and Frances McCullough (New York: Ballantine Books, 1982), xv.

95 Hughes is also criticized for his editing of the *Ariel* poems; see Lynda K. Bundtzen, *The Other Ariel* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001).

96 It should be noted that Rose uses the term “archive” to refer to the entire body of Plath’s published and unpublished writing, rather than in the sense that an archivist would use the word, i.e. to refer to an aggregation of records held in an archival repository.

97 Jacqueline Rose, *The Haunting of Sylvia Plath* (London: Virago, 1991), 70.

98 Sylvia Plath, *Letters Home by Sylvia Plath, Correspondence 1950–1963*, ed. Aurelia Schober Plath (Toronto, New York, and London: Bantam, 1975).

99 Rose, *The Haunting of Sylvia Plath*, 75.

100 *Ibid.*, 78.

101 In a letter she drafted to Ted Hughes, Aurelia Plath explained that she felt a duty to correct what she saw as false statements in the press about Sylvia Plath and about her relationships with her family members. See Indiana University, Lilly Library, Sylvia Plath Collection, MSS II, box 6a, file 17, Aurelia Plath, draft letter to Ted Hughes, 11 March 1973.

argues that the publication of the abridged *Journals of Sylvia Plath* by Ted Hughes was intended as a “corrective” to the portrayal of Plath and her writing presented in *Letters Home*. In his essay “Sylvia Plath and Her Journals,” Hughes justifies his motivations for publishing Plath’s private papers, suggesting that the journals provide a “ballast” against both the “errant versions” of her life propagated by her biographers and “the account she gave of herself to her mother” in her letters. Hughes believes this account often rings false, tainted by Plath’s desire to please her mother and her need to conform to certain familial roles.¹⁰² While Aurelia Plath focused on presenting a cheery, hard-working, and loving daughter in *Letters Home*, Hughes concentrates on depicting Plath involved in what he refers to as an “obscure [psychic] process,” taking place in a “deeply secluded mythic and symbolic theatre” and leading to “the birth of her new creative self.”¹⁰³ According to Hughes, the value of the diaries is in the way they provide evidence of this process, and in his assessment of them, he inscribes upon them a particular type of narrative – that of the struggling artist battling her inner demons. In Rose’s opinion, Hughes’s emphasis on Plath’s “inner drama” is intended not only to promote a mythic view of the creative artist, but also to deflect attention away from his own role in the drama of Plath’s life; by focusing on Plath’s psychic struggles, Hughes shifts the blame for Plath’s depression and suicide away from himself and suggests that it was an almost inevitable outcome of her efforts to find an authentic poet’s voice.

The battle over Plath’s posthumous reception and reputation spills over into the archives at Smith College and at the Lilly Library.¹⁰⁴ The collection of Plath materials at Smith College was deposited by Ted Hughes, while the collection at the Lilly Library was deposited by Aurelia Plath. At each repository, the donors’ intentions influence the shape and interpretation of the collections. In particular, researchers in both collections may be struck by the frequency with which Aurelia Plath’s voice asserts itself. In the introduction to *Letters Home*, Aurelia Plath confesses to “pack-rat tendencies.”¹⁰⁵ She saved every letter her daughter wrote to her and kept them in packets, hoping that Sylvia

102 Ted Hughes, “Sylvia Plath and Her Journals,” in *Ariel Ascending: Writings About Sylvia Plath*, ed. Paul Alexander (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 152–53.

103 *Ibid.*, 154–56 and *passim*.

104 Throughout this section, I have removed direct quotes from Plath’s letters. Permission to publish is required from the Plath estate, and over the years, scholars have had different difficulties acquiring permission. This control over permission to quote can be viewed as another type of action by the archiving “I” or by coaxers and coercer that affects the way the archive communicates.

105 Aurelia Schober Plath, “Introduction,” in Sylvia Plath, *Letters Home by Sylvia Plath: Correspondence 1950–1963*, ed. Aurelia Schober Plath (Toronto, New York, and London: Bantam, 1975), 26.

could some day make use of them.¹⁰⁶ Aurelia Plath was not only keeping the letters, however; she was also adding to them, and Sylvia Plath’s letters in both the Smith and Lilly collections are replete with Aurelia Plath’s annotations.¹⁰⁷ Many of these annotations appear to have been added soon after she received the letters. Tracy Brain suggests that these annotations may have been used by Aurelia Plath “to make quick notes of any questions or points she wanted to raise in response,” and she cites an example where Aurelia Plath seems to be thinking of financial advice to pass directly to Sylvia.¹⁰⁸ Other annotations seem to have been made as Aurelia Plath prepared letters for publication. Sometimes these annotations consist of lists of a letter’s contents on its envelope or of explanations for references made by Sylvia Plath.

In addition to these practical annotations, there are annotations that show Aurelia Plath reacting to the contents of the letters in a more reflective manner. Shortly after Sylvia Plath died in February 1963, her mother made and dated annotations on a number of her daughter’s letters. In one of these, from February 1961, Plath worries that her recent miscarriage will cause her mother disappointment; Aurelia makes an affectionate annotation, indicating her love for her daughter.¹⁰⁹ In another letter, written in November 1962, Sylvia Plath takes her mother to task for identifying too closely with her own happiness. Aurelia notes that she is sorry for having made Plath feel that way during her lifetime.¹¹⁰

Aurelia Plath inserts her point of view into the letters in other ways, too, underlining negative comments about Hughes and in some places blacking out Plath’s lines with a heavy marker.¹¹¹ She reads back through the letters to try to track the failure of her daughter’s marriage, identifying incidents described by Sylvia as steps on the way to its demise. She notes, for example, the first mention of Assia Wevill, whose affair with Hughes forced his separation

106 *Ibid.*, 3.

107 Although I do not discuss these here, in addition to annotating her daughter’s letters, Aurelia Plath annotated several of the various diaries and notebooks she eventually donated to the Lilly Library; see Lilly Library, Sylvia Plath Collection, MSS II, box 7.

108 Tracy Brain, “Sylvia Plath’s Letters and Journals,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Sylvia Plath*, ed. Jo Gill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 147. Aurelia Plath’s habit of annotating the letters she received in order to help her draft responses is evident in letters from a number of different correspondents and may result partly from her training and many years of work as a secretary.

109 Lilly Library, Sylvia Plath Collection, MSS II, box 6, file 21, Aurelia Plath, annotation dated 14 February 1963 on letter received from Sylvia Plath, 6 February [1961].

110 Lilly Library, Sylvia Plath Collection, MSS II, box 6a, file 4, Aurelia Plath, annotation dated 14 February 1963 on letter received from Sylvia Plath, 29 November [1962].

111 See, for example, letters in Lilly Library, Sylvia Plath Collection, MSS II, box 6a. Tracy Brain also discusses this type of treatment by Aurelia Plath; see Brain, “Sylvia Plath’s Letters and Journals,” 148.

from Plath,¹¹² and she writes on the back of a letter sent to her in June 1962 that it was the final letter she received before the marriage unravelled.¹¹³ To other letters, she adds statements about the character of Hughes and of his sister, Olwyn, and about their motivations with respect to Plath's financial and cultural legacies. Included in each collection of Plath material – at the Lilly Library and at Smith – are series of letters written to and by Aurelia Plath following her daughter's death, detailing her continuing struggle to portray Sylvia as more than a death-driven, slightly mad poet, and their mother-daughter relationship as healthy, loving, and supportive.¹¹⁴

Brain describes Aurelia Plath's treatment of her daughter's letters as an effort to "build up her own narrative upon them." Considering the question of to whom Aurelia Plath's annotations were directed, Brain allows that some of the annotations were meant for her daughter or as reminders to herself, but suggests that many of them were "written specifically for other people's eyes: those of the researchers who use the archive."¹¹⁵ Several of these annotations are reminders to keep particular letters safe,¹¹⁶ and in a note Aurelia Plath added to a letter in which Sylvia described an argument she had had with Olwyn Hughes, Aurelia vows to ensure that Sylvia's letters are sold to a repository where the public might read them.¹¹⁷ In 1977, Aurelia Plath sold all the papers she possessed to the Lilly Library. These include not only writings by Plath, but also files of correspondence received by Aurelia after Sylvia's death. Four years later, Hughes sold all the Plath papers in his possession to Smith College.

Like the collection in Bloomington, the collection at Smith College also includes a number of letters that have been heavily annotated by Aurelia Plath

112 Lilly Library, Sylvia Plath Collection, MSS II, box 6a, file 3, Sylvia Plath, letter to Aurelia Plath, 14 May 1962, annotated by Aurelia Plath, annotations undated.

113 Lilly Library, Sylvia Plath Collection, MSS II, box 6a, file 3, Sylvia Plath, letter to Aurelia Plath, 15 June 1962, annotated by Aurelia Plath, annotations undated.

114 Stuart MacDonald, L.M. Montgomery's son and literary executor, worked in a similar way in his mother's archive, though to a lesser extent; the collection at the University of Guelph includes numerous newspaper clippings about Montgomery and her works and some of these have been annotated by MacDonald to correct what he sees as false impressions of his mother's character or to protest poor reviews.

115 Brain, "Sylvia Plath's Letters and Journals," 148. Brain also discusses Aurelia Plath's annotation of her daughter's letters in *The Other Sylvia Plath* (London: Pearson Education, 2001), 33–36.

116 See, for example, Lilly Library, Sylvia Plath Collection, MSS II, letters in box 6, file 21; box 6a, file 17; box 15, file 68.

117 Lilly Library, Sylvia Plath Collection, MSS II, box 6, file 21, Sylvia Plath, letter to Aurelia Plath, 1 January 1961, annotated by Aurelia Plath, annotations undated; on a copy she made of this letter, Aurelia Plath has written a note to herself as a reminder to sell all her letters so that eventually they might be viewed by the public. In a letter to Olwyn Hughes, Aurelia Plath assures her that she is making arrangements for the placement of the papers in her possession. See Lilly Library, Sylvia Plath Collection, MSS II, Aurelia Plath, box 6a, file 9, "Passages from letter to Olwyn, 7 March 1966."

(received in separate accessions subsequent to Hughes’s original deposit), as well as correspondence received by Hughes and his sister after Plath’s death. In much of this correspondence, researchers can observe the battle for control over Plath’s image and work being fought by Aurelia Plath, Ted Hughes, and Olwyn Hughes. Letters sent between them outline the fraught negotiations over what to publish and when and how to deal with various Plath biographers, while Aurelia Plath’s annotations continue to attempt to guide future readers’ understanding of these debates. Ted Hughes’s voice is also heard, in the collection at Smith, explaining many of Plath’s poems. When Plath’s papers were handed over, several of the poetry manuscripts were arranged in bundles, and around each bundle was attached a page of Hughes’s notes. These notes indicate mostly the number of pages of draft for each poem and whether the poem was heavily or lightly corrected, as well as details about the scrap material on which the draft was composed, but occasionally they also consist of interpretive or explanatory notes concerning their composition or references in the poems to real-life objects or events. In the archives, as in his forewords to *The Journals*, Hughes can be seen attempting to impose a particular reading on Plath’s work.¹¹⁸

That the “real” Sylvia Plath is hard to locate amid the mixed intentions of her husband’s and mother’s editorial efforts is roundly acknowledged by Plath scholars. Rose implies that more important than the question “Who was Plath?” is the question “Who speaks for Plath, and why?”¹¹⁹ Since her death, Plath has been spoken for by biographers and critics as well as by her husband and mother, who used her words in ways that allowed them to speak *through* her. Rose uses the metaphor of *le corps morcelé*, or “the-body-in-pieces”¹²⁰ to describe the Plath archive, as it is composed of the fragmentary textual remains of the dead poet, which are then manipulated by interested parties to produce “readings” of her life and self. In a more recent article, Anita Helle notes that while the popularity of Rose’s style of psychoanalytic criticism has waned, Rose’s “broader insight that Plath’s legacy provides an absorbing instance of archive formation as a cultural process, occurring through a variety of means ... and engaging a range of public interests” has continuing relevance.¹²¹

Although scholars like Rose, Helle, and Brain have focused on the Plath archive to tell the many tales of intention and intervention that have formed it, they have each overlooked a significant aspect of “archive formation”:

118 See Smith College Libraries, Mortimer Rare Book Room, Sylvia Plath Collection, series 6, “Ted Hughes.”

119 Rose, *The Haunting of Sylvia Plath*, passim.

120 *Ibid.*, 72.

121 Anita Helle, “Lessons from the Archive: Sylvia Plath and the Politics of Memory,” *Feminist Studies* 31, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 634.

the role of the archivist. In recent years, the impact of archival intervention on the nature and shape of an archive has increasingly been recognized and examined. The postmodern turn came late to archival theory, but when it did, archivists such as Terry Cook, Tom Nesmith, and Brien Brothman, among others, made frequent reference to the creative role of the archivist, who, ultimately, decides which records will be kept or destroyed and who, through arrangement and description, creates the representation of the archive first encountered by researchers.¹²²

Much has been written recently about the impact of archival processing on the archival fonds.¹²³ Michelle Light and Tom Hyry explain that even in cases where arrangement and description involves minimal processing – perhaps just the transfer of material from original containers to archival folders and boxes – significant original context is lost.¹²⁴ In many other cases, this type of loss is intensified when archival processing is more complicated. In “Arranging the Self,” MacNeil and I briefly describe the efforts made by processing archivists at McMaster University and at the University of Calgary to attempt to restore a sense of “original” order to the Marian Engel and Alice Munro fonds, respectively. Both fonds arrived at repositories in considerable disorder, and processing archivists at each institution used physical clues and close reading to try to

122 See, for example, Tom Nesmith, “Seeing Archives: Postmodernism and the Changing Intellectual Place of Archives,” *American Archivist* 65, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2002): 24–41; Brien Brothman, “Orders of Value: Probing the Theoretical Terms of Archival Practice,” *Archivaria* 32 (Summer 1991): 78–100; Terry Cook, “Fashionable Nonsense or Professional Rebirth: Postmodernism and the Practice of Archives,” *Archivaria* 51 (Spring 2001): 14–35; Terry Cook, “Archival Science and Postmodernism: New Formulations for Old Concepts,” *Archival Science* 1, no. 1 (March 2001): 3–24; Wendy Duff and Verne Harris, “Stories and Names: Archival Description as Narrating Records and Constructing Meanings,” *Archival Science* 2, no. 3 (January 2002): 263–85.

123 See, for example, Nesmith, “Seeing Archives”; Brothman, “Orders of Value”; Duff and Harris, “Stories and Names”; Heather MacNeil, “Picking Our Text: Archival Description, Authenticity, and the Archivist as Editor,” *American Archivist* 68, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2005): 264–78; Douglas, “What We Talk About When We Talk About Original Order in Writers’ Archives”; Peter Horsman, “Dirty Hands: A New Perspective on the Original Order,” *Archives and Manuscripts* 27 (May 1999): 42–53; Heather MacNeil, “Trusting Description: Authenticity, Accountability and the *General International Standard for Archival Description*,” *Journal of Archival Organization* 7, no. 3 (2009): 89–107; Heather MacNeil, “What Finding Aids Do: Archival Description as Rhetorical Genre in Traditional and Web-based Environments,” *Archival Science* 12, no. 4 (December 2012): 485–500; Jennifer Meehan, “Making the Leap from Parts to Whole: Evidence and Inference in Archival Arrangement and Description,” *American Archivist* 72, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2009): 72–90; Laura Millar, “The Death of the Fonds and the Resurrection of Provenance: Archival Context in Space and Time,” *Archivaria* (Spring 2002), 1–15; Elizabeth Yakel, “Archival Representation,” *Archival Science* 3 (2003): 1–25.

124 For more on the transformative effects of archivist’s processing, see also Brothman, “Orders of Value”; Ala Rekrut, “Material Literacy: Reading Records as Material Culture,” *Archivaria* 60 (Fall 2005): 11–37; and Heather MacNeil, “Archivalterity: Rethinking Original Order,” *Archivaria* 66 (Fall 2008): 1–25.

reconstruct what they believed to be each writer’s creative process, to recreate for researchers the writer’s process of composing particular works.¹²⁵ The processing archivists in each case were keenly aware of their impact on the way the materials would later be viewed and interpreted. In the inventory to the Alice Munro Fonds, researchers are warned that processing efforts resulted in a “tentative sort only,”¹²⁶ and Jean Tener describes “wak[ing] up at night wondering if I were putting pages of manuscript together to create versions [Munro] had never written.”¹²⁷ She felt, she explained, as if she were “an interloper in her literary imagination. And I was! I was moving [things around].”¹²⁸ In an interview during which she spoke of the experience of processing Engel’s papers, Kathy Garay describes how her initial attempts to account for having put her “interventionist paws all over” the archive were met with anger by Engel, who felt she was being criticized for not having kept her papers in good order in the first place. Garay was devastated, having only wanted to show good archival faith by explaining her own actions in shaping the fonds, and rewrote her original introduction to the inventory to appease Engel.¹²⁹

Heather MacNeil has described the archivist’s efforts at arrangement and description as akin to those of the textual critic or editor, who aims “to restore a text as closely as possible to its original, authentic form.”¹³⁰ Archival description, she argues, “involves conscious and deliberate decisions about the representation of archival documents” that inevitably affect the way those documents will later be encountered and understood. Certainly, in the cases of Munro and Engel, the archivists’ decisions about where to place particular pages of draft materials have an impact on the way they will be interpreted and on a researcher’s sense of the nature of the materials. In each fonds, for example, pages from uncompleted manuscript novels are brought together, presenting them to readers as a sort of “whole” that never really was. Similarly, the compilation and arrangement of correspondence series into files by name of correspondent and/or in chronological order necessarily imposes a particular kind of narrative arc over the material.¹³¹

125 For more on the processing of the two fonds, see K.E. Garay and Norma Smith [compilers], *The Marian Engel Archive* (Hamilton, ON: Archives and Research Collections, McMaster University Library, 1984); Moore and Tener, *The Alice Munro Papers First Accession: An Inventory of the Archive at the University of Calgary Libraries*; and Jean F. Tener, “The Invisible Iceberg,” in *The Art of Alice Munro: Saying the Unsayable*, ed. Judith Miller (Waterloo, ON: University of Waterloo Press, 1984).

126 Moore and Tener, *The Alice Munro Papers First Accession*, xxx.

127 Tener, “The Invisible Iceberg,” 40.

128 Steele and Tener, interview by author.

129 Kathy Garay, interview by author, digital recording, Hamilton, ON, 31 October 2010.

130 MacNeil, “Picking Our Text,” 269.

131 Maryanne Dever discusses the “alien continuity” that is imposed on letters arranged in orderly series in her article “Reading Other People’s Mail,” *Archives and Manuscripts* 24 (May 1996): 121. She suggests that when letters that were once “scattered” to different

The Archiving “I,” Coaxers, Coercers, and the Limitations of a Psychological Approach to Writers’ Archives

Although the archivist is able to view records in their “original” state – that is, in the state in which they arrive at a repository before they are re-folded, re-boxed, and described using archival concepts and language (e.g., fonds, series, sub-series, etc.) – the researcher who later uses these records does not have this privilege and is therefore always viewing the archive through the archival filter.¹³² This filter adds one more barrier between the researcher and the “‘real’ or historical ‘I,’” to whom the researcher may be hoping – or expecting – to be granted access. However, even before the archivist gets her “interventionist paws all over” the archive,¹³³ such access is problematic. In the final section of this article, I want to review the various reasons why I believe that a psychological approach to archives is potentially misleading. By psychological approach, I here mean any view of archives that accords primary value to an archive’s ability to reveal or reflect aspects of its creator’s personality or psychology and that suggests conducting archival work based on an interpretation of these aspects. In the first place, we have seen how various authors have made deliberate and extensive efforts to control what enters their archive. The archiving “I” selects or withholds materials and is aware of the archive and its legacy. Often, the archiving “I” makes the conscious decision to keep the personal out of the archive, and in such cases, the ability to assess aspects of character and personality in the archive is largely impeded; in the Alice Munro archive, for example, as McCaig points out, researchers can learn a great deal about the cultural business of writing fiction, but only very little about the person behind the writing. McCaig recalls meeting Munro and explaining that she was working on the archive: “‘Oh my God,’ [Munro] said, laughing, ‘you know *everything!*’” On the contrary, McCaig explains, “Despite countless hours in the archive, I often feel that I know nothing at all.”¹³⁴ As the examples of Montgomery’s and Coupland’s archives demonstrate, even when personal details are included in the archive, it can remain difficult to assess character. Montgomery’s diaries conceal a great deal, but they also reveal much about Montgomery’s private experience and feelings that was previously

recipients and at different times are organized in careful sequence, a “plot of which the letters themselves could not be aware” tends to emerge.

132 As mentioned above, even when an archive is maintained in the order in which it was received, materials are still rehoused in archival folders and boxes, and intellectual schemas are constructed over them; the archive that the researcher sees after it has been processed – no matter how minimal that processing – is not the same as the archive at the moment it arrived at the repository.

133 Garay, interview by author.

134 McCaig, *Reading In*, 15–16.

unknown to her readers and critics. Nevertheless, readers and critics remain uncertain about how to interpret many of the details in Montgomery’s diary, how to accommodate and reconcile the various Montgomerys now in circulation. The self is shown with certainty to be, as Janna Malamud Smith wrote, “rather a vast archive of *selves*.”¹³⁵

The work of “coaxers and coercers” – the presence of other voices and intentions – in writers’ archives further complicates psychological reading. In Coupland’s fonds, there are many items whose original source is difficult to determine without access to the source himself; certainly most – if not all – of the creative work originates with Coupland, but what about the many receipts, notes, travel itineraries, and ticket stubs? As we saw in the case of Sylvia Plath, the work of coaxers and coercers can also have a more profound effect on the shape of the archive and its eventual interpretation. Any researcher working with the Plath material will find it impossible to avoid being influenced by the voices of Plath’s mother, husband, and sister-in-law. Even those researchers who avoid the sections of the archive in which these voices are most prominent will not be able to escape them as they have already so deeply infiltrated Plath criticism; the archive of Sylvia Plath can no longer – and perhaps has never been able to – be read solely on its own terms.

In addition to the effect on the archive of the archiving “I” and of “coaxers and coercers,” other factors hinder the psychological approach.¹³⁶ For example, the bulk of personal material that does exist in writers’ archives often consists of letters written by others. Although Purdy might have saved carbons of all his letters for his own archive, he was not typical.¹³⁷ Most of the letters in a writer’s archive are usually addressed *to* them, and while they may contain details that help to illuminate aspects of the writer’s character, these are obviously filtered through the correspondent’s point of view and relationship to the writer. In a review of an exhibit of artist Isabel McLaughlin’s archive, Rodney G.S. Carter notes the odd effect of “reading” McLaughlin through her archive:

McLaughlin did not keep copies of her correspondence, so while the viewer is given a great deal of insight into the activities, thoughts, and feelings of her correspondents, they can grasp very little of who McLaughlin herself was. What can easily be inferred from the documents on display is that she was a good friend, that she was passionate

135 Smith, *Private Matters*, 153.

136 Although in my dissertation I examine a number of these other factors, in the interest of space only those most salient to a discussion of the shapers of archives are included here.

137 Neither was he necessarily unusual; several other examples of writers saving copies of their letters to increase the financial value of their archives might be cited. Dorothy Livesay is an example, while Earle Birney was famous for his habit of saving things for his archive at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto. Richard Landon, interview by author, digital recording, Toronto, 26 August 2010.

about art, and that she was selfless in her support of the people and things she loved. The viewer, however, is left wondering what McLaughlin thought, how she viewed her activities, and what she was trying to accomplish in undertaking them.¹³⁸

The effect Carter describes is similar to the effect I experienced as I worked through the fonds discussed in this article. Often, the most vibrant voices and the most revealing stories in the archive belong not to the creator of the archive but to his or her correspondents. To an extent, the archive is less a reflection of what its creator thought than it is of what others thought of her.

Another aspect of the writers' archives I studied that I think must be discussed as a hindrance to the psychological approach is the prosaic nature of some writers' attitudes toward their archives. In many of the fonds, I found statements from the writer concerning his or her thoughts about the archive, usually in correspondence with other writers or with the agents and archivists who negotiated for its transfer to a repository. Often, writers express surprise that anyone would be interested in what they refer to as "junk." Munro, in a letter to Mordecai Richler about the University of Calgary, asks him, "And what are 'papers'? I throw out most first drafts but I do have a fair amount of revolting stuff around."¹³⁹ Similarly, in an exchange with Laurie Larew, an agent who helped authors sell their manuscripts, Atwood referred to piles of "junk" she had at home in Toronto; "Is that what you want?" she asked.¹⁴⁰ As we have seen, Atwood cautioned her biographers about the kind of story they might tell based on the material in her archive, and she seems at times in her correspondence with Sullivan and Cooke to suggest that the archive includes a certain amount of worthless cast-offs. When Sullivan asks her about the significance of something she wrote while she was at Harvard as a graduate student, Atwood replies, "I don't remember it. It sounds kind of stupid." She also warns Sullivan about drawing conclusions about the composition of a very early unpublished novel, explaining that she "continuously saved and mixed up various kinds of paper + notebooks" and suggesting that Sullivan will have a difficult time developing a chronology for the novel's development. Her cavalier treatment of parts of the archive – both before and after transfer to the Fisher Library – has, she herself argues, made it difficult for conclusions to be drawn from it.¹⁴¹

138 Rodney G.S. Carter, review of *Isabel McLaughlin (1903–2002): Painter, Patron, Philanthropist*, curated by Heather Home, *Archivaria* 65 (Spring 2008): 196–97.

139 University of Calgary Libraries, Archives and Special Collections, Mordecai Richler Fonds, second accession, box 30, file 82, Alice Munro, letter to Mordecai Richler, 8 May 1974.

140 University of Toronto, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, Margaret Atwood Papers, MS COLL 200, box 92, file 2, Margaret Atwood, letter to Laurie Larew, draft, 6 January 1967.

141 University of Toronto, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, Margaret Atwood Papers, MSS COLL 335, 2002 accession, box 93, file 2, Margaret Atwood, email to Rosemary Sullivan, copy, 9 March 1998.

In the letter that Richler writes back to Munro about her “papers,” he advises her, as mentioned previously, to stop throwing them out because one or more university libraries will no doubt be interested in buying them from her. He adds, “It’s mistaken, I mean as far as I’m concerned the only thg [sic] of value (hopefully) is a writer’s published work, but if others see it differently, and are willing to pay well, hell.”¹⁴² For most of the writers studied here, money was a significant incentive to sell. Engel explained in a letter to Pauline McGibbon that she felt “very exposed” selling her papers “but one has to survive somehow,”¹⁴³ and in the early exchanges between Atwood and Larew, Atwood states, “My motive of course was money, as I am squeezing along on dlibs + drabs from CBC, Tamarack, etc.”¹⁴⁴ These days, of course, few archives or libraries buy writers’ records. Instead, writers receive a tax receipt for donating. As Richard Landon, formerly director of the Fisher Library, observed in an interview, “There is no point in having tax receipts when you have no income,” but for writers like Atwood and Lawrence Hill, the tax receipt is very useful.¹⁴⁵ Shelley Sweeney, head of University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections, suggests that writers are savvy about tax receipts, that they know when they can best make use of them and plan donations accordingly.¹⁴⁶ Atwood donates every year, but other writers with smaller incomes might wait to donate until a particularly lucrative year makes the tax receipt more useful to them. I do not mean to criticize writers for understanding how best to make archives serve them financially, but rather to point to the banality of some of the intentions that shape the archive. Certainly, in some of the cases discussed here, it seems that it could be problematic to read too much about character or personality into the type of material the archive contains and the way in which the archive develops over time.

142 University of Calgary, Archives and Special Collections, Alice Munro Fonds, MsC 37, box 1, file 21, Mordecai Richler, letter to Alice Munro, 14 May 1974.

143 Marian Engel Fonds, second accrual, box 31, file 62, Marian Engel, letter to Pauline McGibbon, 2 November 1982.

144 Margaret Atwood Papers, MS COLL 200, box 92, file 2, Margaret Atwood, letter to Laurie Larew, draft, 6 January 1967.

145 Landon, interview by author.

146 Shelley Sweeney, interview by author, digital recording, Winnipeg, 19 May 2010. Though I do not discuss the Plath archive specifically here, its “marketability” is discussed by Jacqueline Rose in *The Haunting of Sylvia Plath* and by Lynda K. Bundtzen, who notes how well the collections at Smith College and at the Lilly Library reflect the “wrangling over what, when, and by whom parts of it will be published or made available to scholars, and who will profit thereby”; see Bundtzen, *The Other Ariel*, 12.

Conclusion

As an appraisal criterion, the concept of character has merit. When Catherine Hobbs argues that personal archives should be valued for the ways in which they evidence character or personality, she makes the important point that if we fail to look for the personal in some types of documents, we might erroneously assume they are valueless; scraps of paper in a writer's fonds may appear to tell us little about the business of writing or the composition of a particular work, but it is possible that they will help to illuminate some aspect of the writer's life, work, or self to a researcher with the missing pieces needed to interpret them.¹⁴⁷ However, as a foundation for rethinking archival principles such as original order or for guiding arrangement and description decisions, the concept of character is more problematic. Can the archivist be expected to interpret character properly in a writer's papers when writers can work to craft a particular record of their life and/or can subvert or remove the more personal parts of their archive; when this work of crafting and subverting can also be carried on by people other than the creator; and when, at the same time, the partialness of the archive, its tendency to relate to particular parts of a writer's life, and its frequent banality can skew our reading of it? I do not want to argue that there is no psychological context to a personal archive or that character is not evident (to some extent) in it, but rather to advise archivists to use caution when it comes to the claims they make and the foundation on which they try to build theory for personal archives. While we may agree that archives have a psychological dimension, we also need to recognize the significant constraints we face in understanding and interpreting that dimension, and therefore the limited scope of psychological approaches to archival work. Instead, what we need is a greater focus on the various processes and agents – the archiving “I,” other interested parties, and archivists themselves – that shape an archive over time.¹⁴⁸ This article's more detailed look at the work of the archiving “I” and of coaxers and coercers confirms the need to understand writers' archives as social and collaborative texts, and to represent their social and collaborative nature more carefully to those who use them and who trust us to represent them.

147 Catherine Hobbs, “The Character of Personal Archives: Reflections on the Value of Records of Individuals,” *Archivaria* 52 (Fall 2001): 132.

148 This focus on the processes and agents that shape an archive over time is also explored in Douglas, “What We Talk About When We Talk About Original Order in Writers' Archives,” where I look at how archivists' interpretations of the principle of respect for original order affect the nature of the processed archive. In addition, I have two manuscripts in preparation, also based on my dissertation, which consider, respectively, how ideas about archival creatorship (i.e. provenance) need to be re-examined in light of the active work of the archiving “I” and of coaxers and coercers; and how archival description, which has tended to hide the constructedness of fonds can be made to be more honest about the various processes and agents that form and reform archives over time.

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