

‘Down, You Vagabond of a Heart!’:

Romance and Created Personas in the Journals
of L. M. Montgomery

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November 2010
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Abbreviations

The Selected Journals = The Selected Journals of L. M. Montgomery

TS = Unpublished typescript of L. M. Montgomery's journals, volume 2.

UJ = Unpublished journals, volume 1.

UJ2 = Unpublished journals, volume 2.

UJ4 = Unpublished journals, volume 4.

1. Introduction

[T]here was neither past, present, nor future but only the great 'I-Am'.
(Montgomery UJ2¹: 425-7)

I hate the word 'flirtation' – it sounds cheap and vulgar and those little moonshinings were sweet and innocent and harmless. Reading over those old days always stirs my heart and nature to their very depths and touches the 'source of tears'.

(Montgomery UJ2: 424-5)

1.1 Aims of the thesis

The Canadian author L. M. (Lucy Maud) Montgomery (1874-1942) is mainly known for her children's and young adult fiction, especially *Anne of Green Gables* (1908). In this thesis I will concentrate on her personal journals, an area of study less extensively covered. An entry in Montgomery's unpublished journals written on Sunday, March 10, 1907, describes the effect of being able to wander outside after the long, hard and claustrophobic winter of Prince Edward Island. Not merely depicting the effect the surrounding nature has on her, Montgomery creates an image of the self, sufficient in itself, detached from the mundane in the world and experiencing a sublime moment where the I needs 'not love nor comradeship nor any human emotion to round out my felicity' (Montgomery UJ2: 425-7).

Highlighting her experience, Montgomery (UJ2: 425-7) writes that she returned from 'a world where time was not, which was young with immortal youth, where there was neither past, present, nor future but only the great "I-Am"'. Perhaps unconsciously, she succeeds in paralleling a human experience in nature with diary writing. It would be hard to find a better description of the nature of journalising: it is beyond the restrictions of actual time, being a kind of fiction as well as thoroughly, almost neurotically fascinated by the great 'I-Am' – the author of the diary, simultaneously its subject and

¹ The first volume of *The Selected Journals of L. M. Montgomery* is comprised of material from the first two unpublished manuscripts. When an entry is available in *The Selected Journals* I refer to the published source for practical reasons. However, some entries do not feature in the published journals, thus when referring to those I provide a reference to the unpublished manuscripts. The quotations from the unpublished journal ledgers are based on the editing copy by the editors of *The Selected Journals* (Mary Rubio, Elizabeth Waterston and William Toye) which I was kindly let to peruse at the Archival and Special Collections of University of Guelph, Ontario with the permission of Dr. Mary Rubio.

object.²

In an entry written a little over a week earlier, on Wednesday, February 27, 1907, Montgomery, who has not yet been freed from the seclusion of the house, reads over her old journal and relives past events and memories. Referring to a teenage beau, Montgomery (UJ2: 424-5) pauses to find an adequate word for their interactions: ‘flirtation’ carries a connotation too vulgar and cheap, and, if we are to believe her, ‘those little moonshinings’ were above all innocent and harmless. These quotations connect with the ones above and introduce the central theme of my thesis: Montgomery’s approach to romance in her journals; her apparent uneasiness with and conflicting accounts of it; and the way this discourse is interrelated with the question of the self in diary writing. Reading the journals we are very much invited to pore over their narrative just as Montgomery does when reading her old diary, that is, our heart strings should stir and our ‘source of tears’ will most definitely be touched. However, I shall examine how this effect is created and scrutinise the way in which the I of the diary presents itself in relation to romance. I will claim that although Montgomery’s diurnal writing might seem mimetic and honest, there is in fact a conscious author at work on all levels of the journals.

Some key words essential to my thesis are *life writing*, *narrating/narrated Is*, *audience*, *narrativity* and *fictionalisation*, all of which will be further discussed subsequently. I will mainly focus on the first volume of *The Selected Journals of L. M. Montgomery* (1985), edited by Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston, including the entries that were omitted from this published version and are part of the unpublished manuscripts stored in the Archival and Special Collections of University of Guelph, Ontario. Some chronological order is found in the succession of the chapters: I begin with a discussion of Montgomery’s teenage infatuations and school time romances in chapter 2, and go on to analyse a more grown-up depiction of romance, one that follows the convention of the two suitors, in chapter 3. These two chapters especially probe the question of narrativity and fictionality.

However, as I will demonstrate in 1.3, referring to chronology in Montgomery’s journals is extremely difficult, since they have been revised and transfigured several

²The obsession of diary writing with the self and introspection is a relatively new phenomenon. Margo Culley (1985: 4-5) notes that genre-wise, female diarists up until the early nineteenth century must be seen as family recorders and social historians, in contrast to their later counterparts from nineteenth century onwards, whose primary subject in diary writing is the self. Culley (1985: 5) links this change with the romantic discovery of the secular self, the emergence of the private and public spheres emphasised by the industrial revolution and the creation of psychoanalytic terminology such as individual consciousness.

times. As an example of this, chapter 4 deals with a secret diary Montgomery kept with her friend Nora Lefurgey in 1903. This diary is included neither in the published version of the journals nor in the unpublished manuscripts, but exists in a typescript Montgomery prepared of her journals, also archived in the University of Guelph. Chapter 4 does not review an actual romance but rather a discourse that mocks and parodies romantic language and provides an apt carnivalesque contrast to the depiction of romance in Montgomery's personal journals.

In addition to discussing role play and theatrical aspects of Montgomery's secret diary in chapter 4, I will use the term *persona* throughout my thesis. According to Margo Culley (1985: 12), 'all diarists are involved in a process, even if largely unconscious, of selecting details to create a persona'. A term that offers a more fictional and textual connotation than *identity* (from Latin *idem*, 'the same')³, *persona* entails connections with both role play and self. Being less fluctuating than a role and more variable than identity, *persona* derives from the Latin word meaning 'mask' or 'character', which aptly describes the kind of performance Montgomery undertakes in her journals by writing. I will explore the varying personas she creates of herself, although paradoxically a truly romantic persona rarely surfaces in the journals. For Montgomery, then, the romantic self was a real *persona non grata*.

I will not make a strict distinction between the terms *diary* and *journal*. As Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (2001: 193) note, some critics distinguish between the terms by characterising the diary as more intimate and the journal as a more public record. This distinction might work with other diaries/journals – such as clearly private diaries by private persons or public journals by authors such as Virginia Woolf or Anaïs Nin – but is not very useful in Montgomery's case. Her journals move beyond the definition of private and public, rather being both simultaneously.⁴ However, when referring to the published journals as a source I will employ the term journals, just as I will refer to the more private diary of Montgomery and Lefurgey as diary.

1.2 Autobiography and diary theory and Montgomery's literary career

Montgomery kept a diary almost non-stop throughout her life from when she was 14 years old to the years preceding her death. These diaries, published in five volumes by

³See for example Pettersson (2008: 23).

⁴The aspects of private and public diaries will be discussed in more detail in chapters 2 and 4.

Oxford University Press (1985-2004), comprise over fifty years of ordinary life, thoughts and experiences of a Canadian woman, and that woman's change from an unknown orphan girl to a world famous author. Montgomery's main project was to document her life as fully as possible in diaries, letters, scrapbooks and photographs. Steven E. Kagle and Lorenza Gramegna (1996: 55) note that in contrast to diaries of situation, focusing on a tension or dislocation such as travel or war, there exists also the sub genre of *life diary*, which continues for a longer period and is primarily motivated by the habit of journalising. Montgomery's diary writing was essentially of the latter kind. In Montgomery's case, the term *life writing* seems especially apt since indeed for her all of life was about writing.⁵

Montgomery's journals have fascinated literary scholars right from the publication of the first volume in 1985. The main interest has lied in the biographical information on Montgomery and the background knowledge one can acquire from the diaries about her fictional work.⁶ As Cecily Devereux (2005: 249) has noted, she among others was expecting the published journals to 'reveal the full story of *Anne of Green Gables*' in addition to shedding light on what Montgomery was 'really doing and thinking when she wrote her book'. Devereux's words are revealing since they illuminate the mental attitude people usually have towards diaries: they supposedly reveal the *full* story of a person and unveil what that person was *really* thinking and doing.

However, modern autobiographical scholarship acknowledges that 'autobiography, is of necessity a fiction, that is, a construct arranged by an interpreter' (Miller 1991, as cited in Kagle and Gramegna 1996: 38), and that 'to write of anyone's history is to order, to give form to disparate facts; in short, to fictionalize' (Hutcheon 1988: 82). Both of these insights can be extended to diaries.⁷ As a genre, diary writing is after all autobiographical to the highest degree and affected by the presence of an audience, whether a public one or merely the writer herself. There is, however, a clear-cut difference between autobiography as a genre and the term *autobiographical*. While autobiography as a literary genre has been intensively theorised by critics such as

⁵For a more detailed discussion on the term see Marlene Kadar (1992: 3-16), who defines *life writing* as a 'more inclusive term' that might have critical advantages over *biography* and *autobiography*.

⁶What Suzanne L. Bunkers and Cynthia A. Huff (1996b: 1) mention proves that this tendency ties in with a more general one: 'Within the academy the diary has historically been considered primarily as a document to be mined for information about the writer's life and times and as a means of fleshing out historical accounts'. They go on to note that 'now, however, the diary is recognized by scholars as a far richer lode' (Bunkers and Huff 1996b: 1).

⁷Bunkers and Huff (1996b: 4) highlight how 'the narrative structure of diaries can be quite complex in shape and pattern'.

George Gusdorf, Philippe Lejeune, Paul John Eakin, James Olney, and by feminist scholars such as Sidonie Smith, Donna C. Stanton, Leigh Gilmore and Shari Benstock, to mention but a few, I employ the term *autobiographical* for all writing that centres on the self and in which the author examines her own life.⁸

While several insights raised by theorists of autobiography are crucial and helpful for studying diaries – especially autobiographical studies’ focus on the subject and its formation in the autobiographical act – there are issues in diary writing not dealt within autobiographical studies. Thus, I will focus on actual diary scholarship, an area of study extensively covered in the United States and Canada, by such writers as Margo Culley, Felicity A. Nussbaum, Suzanne L. Bunkers, Steven E. Kagle and Helen M. Buss.⁹ Fortunately, in the twenty years that separate Nussbaum’s excellent essay ‘Toward Conceptualizing Diary’ (1988) and the current moment, much more literature has surfaced on women’s diaries.¹⁰

Montgomery’s literary career intriguingly ties in with the more general paradigm shifts in literary criticism and literary scholarship during the twentieth century. As Benjamin Lefebvre (2003: viii) notes in his master’s thesis, Montgomery was a woman ‘struggling with internalized patriarchal and Protestant values’, which connects her with the major changes of the early twentieth century and aptly summarises some of the most interesting aspects of her writing. Coincidentally, in addition to this personal struggle, Montgomery faced some critical assaults and had to witness her career developing from high praise to condemnation with the emergence of modernist literature and its rather aggressive Canadian torchbearers.

Montgomery was still highly respected as an author in the early twentieth century. Among her fans were Mark Twain and Earl Grey as well as Stanley Baldwin and Ramsay MacDonald (both of whom prime ministers of Great Britain) (Rubio 2008: 2). Thus, it was mainly modernism and its male advocates – especially William Deacon – that canonised Canadian literature as predominately white, male and modernist fiction for adults, and as a matter of course excluded ‘sentimental’ writers such as

⁸Montgomery’s journals notably move between the definitions of autobiography and diary. As Devereux (2005: 247) has pointed out, Montgomery saw her journal as a hybrid between diary and conventional autobiography, ‘a document that would take her readers from her childhood . . . to the end of her life, within a continuous, constructed narrative, and as a work of art’.

⁹For a thorough discussion on the history of American diary see Culley (1985); for a discussion on the history of autobiographies and diaries in England and Europe see Nussbaum (1988); and for a discussion on the brief history of diary criticism and theory see Bunkers and Huff (1996b). For an extensive examination of autobiography and life narratives see Smith and Watson (2001).

¹⁰Nussbaum (1988: 128) states that ‘diary and journal . . . have seldom been the subject of theoretical discussion’ and goes on to state that ‘in many ways the status of diary in the 1980s parallels the status of autobiography in the 1950s’.

Montgomery. Rubio (2008: 466) summarises this process fittingly:

Once her critical descent started, Maud's loss of status would continue steadily until her death. Not until near the end of the twentieth century . . . would literary critics dismantle and discredit the norms that the entire generation of academic critics had worked so hard to establish in the 1930s, norms that pushed popular fiction – and almost all women's writing – completely out of the canon and off the map of literary culture.¹¹

It is also noteworthy that Montgomery was not originally categorised as a children's author. Her books were marketed for an adult audience, and as one can notice by examining the cover art of her novels, this categorisation as a children's writer emanates only later as a joint endeavour by the publishing market, literary criticism and book industry in general.

Simultaneously with the rise of second wave feminism in the 1970s surfaced a greater interest in female authors repudiated by the male canon, as well as theories on autobiographical and diary texts with a feminist twist. During this feminist literary renaissance, Montgomery's reputation slowly gained new momentum and was reassessed by scholars such as Elizabeth Waterston and Mollie Gillen.¹² The publication of Montgomery's journals from 1980s onwards has brought the complexities of her personal life to the awareness of the general public – although her books have never ceased to be read – and a collection of essays published in 2005, *The Intimate Life of L. M. Montgomery*, edited by Irene Gammel, thoroughly reviews several aspects of Montgomery's life writing.

Yet a complete and substantial study of Montgomery's journals remains to be written, especially one that would look into the plethora of autobiographical texts Montgomery produced.¹³ Elizabeth Epperly has scrutinised Montgomery's scrapbooks and photography, and several scholars from Helen M. Buss and Gammel to Margaret E. Turner and Devereux have analysed different aspects of Montgomery's journals in detail, but to my knowledge no book-length study exists.

My thesis aims to fill some of this gap, and by using the method of close reading

¹¹For further discussion on the changes in Montgomery's literary reputation see for example Rubio (2008: 2-4, 457-66) and Åhmansson (1991: 13-25).

¹²Waterston's (1966) essay 'Lucy Maud Montgomery 1874-1942' was 'the first in-depth scholarly article that attempted to recover Montgomery as an important early Canadian woman writer', according to Rubio (2008: 660). Gillen's biography on Montgomery was published in 1975. The first doctoral thesis on Montgomery's fiction appeared as late as 1991 by Gabriella Åhmansson. One of the early influential scholars was also Francis W. P. Bolger who published *The Years Before 'Anne'* in 1974.

¹³By autobiographical texts I mean Montgomery's journals, scrapbooks, photographs and letters, as well as her published 'memoir' *The Alpine Path* (1917), although I am fully aware that also her fictional works contain much autobiographical subject matter, which calls for further study. See also 1.3 for a detailed discussion on the different versions of Montgomery's journals.

in analysing the journals I strive to prove that Montgomery's life writing should be examined as thoroughly as her fiction and with a hefty grain of salt. In other words, one should be careful when confronted by the myths Montgomery creates in writing and rewriting. Excavating both unconscious and conscious tactics in use, which try to guide the reader to places Montgomery wanted her to go, is crucial in studying the journals.

As Rubio (2008: 1) notes in the introduction to her voluminous biography, Montgomery's journals are 'a cache of concealments, displacements, contradictions, and omissions'. Thus, reading against the grain should be a requisite for any analysis of Montgomery's texts. Liz Stanley (1992: 17) argues that 'the conventional power relations existing between authors and readers are among the last to be questioned and convincingly challenged'. Keeping these power relations in mind, my thesis will suggest that a talented writer such as Montgomery is able to master several styles and take on several personas in writing.

1.3 Montgomery's journals and their editing processes

In order to understand the many layers of Montgomery's journals one should be familiar with the complicated editing processes that produced them. Montgomery began writing a diary when she was nine years old – unfortunately this early endeavour does not survive. According to her later journal entry, she burnt it (Montgomery 1985: 1). In 1889 when Montgomery was fourteen she started writing a 'new kind of diary' (Montgomery 1985: 1) in which she would write more than the mere descriptions of weather of her childhood diary. The originals of these early diaries, written in notebooks of varying sizes, are also extinct, either burnt by Montgomery herself or have otherwise disappeared.

In 1919 Montgomery started copying the earlier diaries by hand into legal-size ledgers adding photos to illustrate the entries (Montgomery 1987: 341). It remains unclear how much editing Montgomery undertook during this copying process for comparing the hand-written manuscripts with the original notebooks (written during 1889-1918) is not possible. While Montgomery herself claims authenticity – 'I shall be careful to copy it [the journal] exactly as it is written' (1987: 341) – it is unquestionable that she amended and revised entries while copying them.

For example, some pages of the hand-written manuscripts have been later omitted and replaced by Montgomery. Examining the original ledgers, one can note how

a page has carefully been razored out and another inserted with a new account of ‘what happened’.¹⁴ Thus, the reader of the journals has to keep in mind all the diverse existing and non-existing diary versions that communicate in various ways and further confuse the chronology of the journals. As Devereux (2005: 244) notes, ‘each of the excisions and reconstructions creates a gap in the story that is both a sign of its incompleteness and a space through which it is possible to see Montgomery constructing her life narrative’.

Mary Rubio (2008: 274) recounts at length the rewriting process highlighting the fact that Montgomery was an author, meaning that ‘shaping, pruning, shading, and amplifying would be any writer’s prerogative’. According to her journals, Montgomery finished copying the early notebooks on April 16, 1922, and subsequently wrote on ‘pads or pieces of scrap paper’ which she then later expanded into journal entries to the ledgers (Rubio 2008: 274). Still later in life, in 1931, Montgomery produced a typewritten copy of her journals for her two sons, which is a markedly abridged version of the original hand-written journals (Rubio 2008: 421).

In addition to the reworking by Montgomery, the editing performed by the editors of the journals further complicates the matter. The published versions – *The Selected Journals* – are selections, as the title suggests, and contain entries from the hand-written, unpublished manuscripts only in part. In “‘A Dusting Off’: An Anecdotal Account of Editing the L. M. Montgomery Journals’, Rubio (2001: 32) explains the manifold and difficult editing process that reduced Montgomery’s own text by approximately 50 percent as this was required by the publisher. In her e-mail to me on October 9, 2009, Rubio highlights how the publisher’s representative wanted first and foremost to produce a ‘readable book’ that would sell well. Towards the publication of the later volumes – volumes 3 to 5 – the editors did not face similar problems with space restrictions, since the journals had already become best-sellers (Rubio, e-mail message to author, October 3, 2009).

In short, the journals that at first seem straightforward enough are actually thoroughly edited and consist of several time frames. The first frame are the actual events, that is, what happened at a given moment and was then written about in the diary. The second frame is the time of writing, performed by the actual author of the journals, L. M. Montgomery. The third frame is the time (or times) of copying and organising carried out by Montgomery herself, which can be called *re-narration*. In

¹⁴The ledgers have printed page numbers and where a page has been cut out Montgomery has had to replace the page number by hand in order to maintain chronology.

addition to this copying process, there exists the typewritten version of the journals, another level of re-narration conducted by Montgomery, and the editing of *The Selected Journals* by editors Mary Rubio, Elizabeth Waterston and the publisher's representative William Toye. Only the last of these time frames, the product of editing as *The Selected Journals*, can be accessed by the common public, since it is the only published version of the journals available.

Montgomery's habit of writing in her journal further confuses the chronology. Although it would be easy to assume that reading the published journals – albeit thoroughly abridged – one is granted an unrestricted access to the original entries, what comes across is actually more complicated than this. According to Rubio (2008: 274), in fact, 'all [Montgomery's] journal entries (which are the reconstruction of material from her earlier notebooks and notes) are written in retrospect, by a woman in her mid-forties', and since *The Selected Journals* are based on the hand-written manuscripts, this retrospective perspective permeates them as well. A concrete example of the layered quality of the journals is the handwriting in the manuscripts. The original notebooks having disappeared, the handwriting is not of the original time of writing and there is a lapse between the date of an entry and the actual text. Thus, one reads a text written by a 14-year-old girl copied in the handwriting of a 45-year-old woman, for instance.

Even on the level of the text, then, the time of narration is not linear or straightforward. Philippe Lejeune's (1989: 4) influential 'law' of autobiography, the autobiographical pact, rules diaries and journals outside of autobiography *propre* because their point of view is not retrospective. Montgomery defies this rule as most her diary entries are written in retrospect long after the actual events took place.¹⁵ As Rubio (2001: 32-3) indicates, the journals, seemingly chronological and consisting of sequentially-dated entries, are actually full of flashbacks and inconsistencies in the linear time line. In fact, Montgomery has gaps as long as two years in her journal. Hence, the retrospective entry that follows is hardly instantaneous or diurnal but rather an artistic creation. As it is not known how much modifying and re-narration Montgomery undertook, and as no 'original' or authentic, unedited material exists, the journals should be studied as a constructed narrative.

¹⁵One could argue contra Lejeune that most diaries are indeed written in retrospect and in the past tense, such as the clichéd 'Dear diary, today *was* a nice day' example suggests. Present tense narration in Montgomery's journals is actually relatively rare.

1.4 Narrating and narrated I

Margo Culley (1985: 10) eloquently summarises the main paradox of diary writing: while its frequent goal is to establish self-continuity, at its heart autobiographical writing involves a dislocation from the self, that is, turning the subject into object. The author of a diary is at least supposedly simultaneously both the narrator and the narratee of the text¹⁶ and one can distinguish between a narrating I – put simply, the ‘I-now’ – and the narrated I – the ‘I-then’ (see Smith and Watson 2001: 58-64). These three aspects – author, narrator and narratee – are blended in diary writing and often hard to separate.

Clearly, it is crucial to know something of the actual author of a journal to recognise gaps in the text or to notice how the age of the author affects the writing, although in Montgomery’s case the matter is further complicated for, as I have noted, her journals are thoroughly edited. Suzanne L. Bunkers (1988: 193) draws attention to ‘the situational context’ of women’s diaries, that is, the purpose and perception of intended audience of the writer. This situational context, although hard to reconstruct, is according to Bunkers (1988: 193) one of the most intriguing areas of examination because it ‘yields a sense of the writer’s character and personality as she shapes her self-image through her writing’. For a text as complex and sophisticated as Montgomery’s journals, however, transcending the life and intentions of the author and concentrating on the narrative aspects of the text seems a more fruitful starting point. Thus, I will focus on studying the personas created mostly by the narrating I of the narrated I in the level of the journals’ narrative.¹⁷

As Smith and Watson (2001: 58) maintain, the autobiographical I is not the same as the flesh-and-blood author. They go on to point out the problems probed by the simple division of the narrating and the narrated I. According to them, this dual differentiation overlooks the complex aspects of self-narrating, and they introduce a more compound model by adding a ‘real’ or historical I and an ideological I (Smith and Watson 2001: 58-9). The historical I in Smith and Watson’s (2001: 59) model is the person producing the autobiographical I, that is, the I as actual person whose existence can be proven by historical records. However, the historical I is not knowable to the

¹⁶Although one could also argue that in diary writing the diary itself can work as a narratee, as in the ‘dear diary’ convention. For Culley (1985: 11), the diary may work as an audience as it is personified. See chapter 4 for a further discussion on audience and the ‘dear diary’ convention.

¹⁷Instead of narrating I and narrated I, Dorrit Cohn employs the terms *the narrating self* and *the experiencing self* in *Transparent Minds* (1978).

readers and cannot be accessed to in an autobiographical narrative (Smith and Watson 2001: 59) – in other words, this I does not reside in the text. The ideological I, on the other hand, is the concept of personhood culturally available to the narrator when he tells his story (Paul Smith 1988 as quoted in Smith and Watson 2001: 61). Put simply, all autobiographical narrators are products of their time, since they are historically and culturally situated (Smith and Watson 2001: 62) – a very important point indeed.

While this more complex model for dividing the autobiographical I is definitely valuable on a theoretical level, I do not find it particularly useful in actual close reading or analysing a text. Smith and Watson (2001: 62) themselves note that ‘the ideological “I” is at once everywhere and nowhere in autobiographical acts’, thus proving how difficult it is for the reader to grasp its existence in the text. Is the ideological I same as the narrating I and/or the narrated I? The rather awkward concept could simply be replaced by the concept of author. She might not be accessible in the text, but offers a perfect place to examine ideological, historical and cultural issues. And could not the term ‘historical I’ be likewise replaced by referring to the author of an autobiographical text? Neither resides in the text but can be ‘assumed from the signature on the title page’ and verified by historical records, as Smith and Watson (2001: 59) suggest. More important than conceptualising diverse autobiographical Is is separating the author from the textual narrator when analysing actual texts. The narrating I uses strategies of a narrator and narration, while the narrated I respectively adapts characterisation that the narrating I addresses to it. Sometimes the two overlap and are hard to distinguish from each other.

Usually, as is often the case with Montgomery’s journals, when the narration is retrospective and the narrating I describes the narrated I in the past the two are easy to keep separate, as in this example: ‘I was a funny-looking object going to school to-day. I had on a big buffalo coat’ (Montgomery 1985: 34). Here the narrating I describes the narrated I as a ‘funny looking object’ under a retrospective gaze. Although the entry is narrated in the first person it would not change much if third-person narration was used (*‘She was a funny-looking object...’*). According to Shari Benstock (1988: 19), definitions of autobiography that stress self-disclosure and narrative account value this kind of narration and firmly believe in the artist’s conscious control over subject matter and authority in general. In her opinion, this ‘first-person actually masking the third-person’ technique although making the self appear organic and narrative seamless shuts out alternative, less coherent ways of describing the self (Benstock 1988: 19-20).

For Benstock (1988: 15), most autobiography theories, such as George

Gusdorf's, overlook the most interesting aspect of the autobiographical, 'the measure to which "self" and "self-image" might not coincide, can never coincide in language'. For my purposes, self and self-image could be replaced by narrating I and narrated I. Indeed, in instances when the I of the diary addresses herself directly, Benstock's point seems valid: 'Oh, you poor pessimist, writing in this strain because you can't write in any other just now. . . . Cheer up – do!' (Montgomery 1985: 305). Differentiating between the narrating and the narrated Is and keeping track of who is addressing whom becomes trickier: Is the narrated I addressing the narrating I, or is the narrating I addressing the actual author of the diary or vice versa?

Benstock's reading of women's autobiographies proves to be valid when studying Montgomery's journals. She argues that women's self-writings often exploit difference and change more than sameness and identity, and have no investment in creating a cohesive self over time (Benstock 1988: 15). Benstock does not take into consideration the question of intention, however. Exploitation of difference can take place unintentionally as well. While Montgomery for instance might have striven to fabricate a cohesive autobiographical I in her journals, what surfaces are several personas, intensively connected to fictional characterisation.

2. 'I Shall Put on Light-Heartedness and Frivolity as a Garment': The (Un)romantic Schoolgirl/Woman and the Ironic Voice

When examining the first edited volume of Montgomery's journals that covers the years 1889-1910 – and the omitted entries from the same period – one has to keep in mind that it does not contain the original diary entries of a 14-year-old girl or a 36-year-old woman. Although especially the entries at the beginning of the first volume seem very private and allegedly honest – Montgomery (1985: 1) even states in the first entry of her diary: 'I am going to keep this book locked up!!' – they have been edited at least three times (Devereux 2005: 243-4) by the author and once more by the editors Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston. Although the structure and style of the first volume is relaxed and intimate, in accordance with what Steve E. Kagle and Lorenza Gramegna (1996: 38) have noted how 'fiction and its patterns may inspire and direct a diary'¹⁸ and not merely vice versa, I will demonstrate that the narrator is influenced by fictional models throughout.

Not even the first volume of Montgomery's journals has the features of a 'truly private' diary, which Lynn Z. Bloom (1996: 25-8) discusses in her essay "'I Write for Myself and Strangers" – Private Diaries as Public Documents'. Bloom's division of diaries into 'truly private' and 'public private' is merely one type of classification, but it offers a tool with which to examine the complexities of journal writing. In order for Montgomery's teenage entries to fit the features of a 'truly private' diary there should be no concern with authorial persona, no in-depth analysis of the self or the characters and the reader would have to rely on much extra-textual information (Bloom 1996: 25-8). Instead, the narrator reports the backgrounds and relations of other characters in some detail: 'Lucy is my cousin. She lives just across our field. *She* is a Macneill, too' (Montgomery 1985: 2; emphasis original). The style is self-reflexive to the extent that the narrator comments on her own writing or directly addresses the reader, as in these examples: '[D]ear me, if I hadn't burned all my other journals I wouldn't have to explain all over again who everybody is', and, 'now, never mind who Jimmy Laird is!' (Montgomery 1985: 2).

It is probable that most of these comments were added when Montgomery edited her journals. As Cecily Devereux (2005: 246) notes, Montgomery's journals can be seen

¹⁸Bunkers and Huff (1996b: 1) also discuss the close connection of diary with other genres by stating that '[the diary's] form, simultaneously elastic and tight, borrows from and at the same time contributes to other narrative structures'.

as the exertion of the desire for control. Montgomery wrote very much with the future public in mind and shaped the text according to how she wished to be regarded (see Devereux 2005: 246). In an entry of July 31, 1902 Montgomery (UJ2: 250-1), anticipating a long stay away from home, declares: 'I shall take my worries and problems . . . my white nights and pale days, and lock them away in a deep place in my soul. And I shall put on light-heartedness and frivolity as a garment'. This determinate statement echoes as a kind of motto in the teenage and early adulthood entries in her journals.

2.1 Fictional models in the teenage entries

Most of the entries in Montgomery's journals are very artfully composed entailing features of prose fiction such as dialogue, scene setting, characterisation and plot construction. In an entry of August 13, 1891 – when Montgomery was 17 – the narrator acknowledges how she is using the journal to capture interesting material for future fiction: 'If ever I write a novel I must put that scene in' (Montgomery 1985: 61). The journal works as an artist's sketch book and many of the scenes in it do indeed feature later in Montgomery's fiction. While her fiction's connections to her life writing are well researched, not much research has been done on the fictionality and fictionalisation of the journals.¹⁹

Kagle and Gramegna (1996: 39) pay attention to the aspect that the model for fictionalisation in diary writing is found in acknowledged fictional genres, which in turn assumes that the journaliser is familiar with diverse literary forms. Montgomery was more than familiar with all kinds of fictions; she was well-read even as a teenager, although the variety of novels available to her at her grandparent's house was limited.²⁰ Poetry of the Romantic school, fairytales and religious texts were more readily available (McDonald-Rissanen 2001: 82) and Montgomery's private library – now stored in the University of Guelph Archives – contains 175 items. One feature of the 'public private' type of diaries, which include a wider scope and range of topics as well as greater variation in form and technique (Bloom 1996: 28-9), is thus that the writer is usually well acquainted with literary models. Hence, the social class of the author is of essence.

¹⁹By *fictionalisation* I do not mean connections to fiction *per se*, but rather the extent to which the text in the journal is fictionalised and uses narrative patterns and aspects typical of fiction.

²⁰For a detailed discussion on the kind of literature Montgomery read when growing up see Rubio (2008: 41-4, 52-4).

As Suzanne L. Bunkers (1988: 193) points out, the greater the economic resources available to the diarist, ‘the greater her opportunity for education, the greater her ease with writing, her familiarity with texts that might serve as models, her free time for writing, and her her money for writing materials’.

Liz Stanley (1992: 14) highlights autobiography’s intertextual character by pointing out how our understanding of ‘lives’ and their becoming ‘written lives’ is gained from written auto/biographies, including fictional ones. It is not merely ‘life as it is lived’ (Stanley 1992: 14) that is the starting-point of life writing, but fiction and narrativity alike. Montgomery is no exception to the rule: she devoured biographies and autobiographies through her life, and mentions in her journal having read George Eliot’s biography, among others. Reading and learning about how to write of life is one of the most important aspects of diary writing.

The idea of fictionalisation ties in with that of audience. Montgomery intended her journal to be eventually published and saw it as a hybrid between autobiography and diary. Montgomery’s assumed audience, then, was right from the beginning external, including her future audience(s) both private – her sons and grandchildren – and public – her readers –, but also internal, including the diary itself as a personification and a friend²¹ and her past, present and future selves. As Bloom (1996: 24) summarises, the presence of an audience requires accommodation through the same textual features that transform private diaries into public documents.

With the early ‘truly private’ diary that she started keeping when she was nine years old and later destroyed, Montgomery was able to rehearse the conventions of keeping a diary, including the realisation of how a possible audience affects diary writing. The narrator of the later, surviving journal notes in the August 1, 1892 entry:

Since I was nine I had kept a childish diary . . . in which all my small transactions were faithfully recorded every day. I was always in a state of chronic terror lest someone – the boys in particular – should see it. (Montgomery 1985: 82)

‘The boys’ refer to two orphan boys, Wellington and David Nelson, who boarded with Montgomery and her grandparents for three years in her childhood. Clearly, the little journaliser is aware of the possibility that the diary might be read by outsiders, her playmates. Interestingly enough, the narrator goes on to note that ‘one winter Well began to keep a diary also and in his turn would never let me see it although of course I

²¹Montgomery (1985: 308) calls her diary in the July 30, 1905 entry ‘this dear old journal, which I love as if it were a living friend’.

was devoured with curiosity' (Montgomery 1985: 82). Right from the extinct childhood diary, then, Montgomery's life writing is with or for someone. Not even the early 'truly private' diary was such a lonely endeavour with Well and Dave as its possible audience and Well as a competitor in diary writing.

Montgomery writes with an eye for fiction from very early on, which is not surprising considering her long career as a diary writer already by that time.²² There is plenty of dialogue, which is a feature of a 'public private' journal. In this example Montgomery depicts the major event of having been escorted home for the first time:

At the top of the hill Neil turned in at his own gate. Snip²³ also turned in at his, but said to us as he did so, 'I don't suppose there will be any *white horses* on the road tonight, will there?' 'No, I guess not', I said. 'If I thought there would be I'd go with you,' he said. Mollie laughed and I said, 'No necessity' but Snip said meditatively, 'I guess I'll go anyhow.' 'He's coming,' whispered Mollie excitedly. And come he did, right home with us. (Montgomery 1985: 3-4; emphasis and punctuation original)

In addition to this excerpt, several entries resemble sketches for short-stories in their artistic composition. The narrator also has a sharp eye for the rules of drama. In the above-mentioned entry, one can find a hero, Snip, two heroines, Montgomery and her friend, villains in the form of two other schoolgirls and a proper dramatic structure with conflict, rising action, climax, dénouement and even some kind of catharsis at the end. It is also noteworthy that the most fictionalised scenes in the diary – such as the one above – are connected to the theme of romance (see 2.2).

In general, inner contemplations are still rare in the first volume and longer, psychologically profound entries begin appearing only towards the end of the volume, depicting the time Montgomery was living in isolation with her ailing grandmother. Montgomery (1987: 1) herself acknowledges this lack of depth in the first entry of the second volume of *The Selected Journals* noting that 'the first volume seems – I think – 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'.

This 'shallow girl' surfaces in instances where the narrator uses the collective pronoun 'we' instead of 'I': 'After tea we put on our hats, linked our arms and sallied forth in old time fashion. . . . We loitered around familiar spots for awhile and talked over old times' (Montgomery 1985: 67). In this 'best friends' style we can also hear echoes from the schoolgirl fiction where girls are each other's most important

²²As a 14-year-old she had kept a diary for almost six years.

²³Snip is the nickname of Nate Lockhart, who is discussed in 2.2.

companions and everybody has their ‘bosom friend’, as Anne in Montgomery’s fiction puts it. Here the narrated I is described as being one with her best friend, events and even feelings are shared and collective and the most important thing is ‘the surface play of life’.

While Montgomery’s claim that the first volume is written by a shallow girl is to some extent true – in the first entries of the first volume the narrating I concentrates on describing events and other people rather than herself, that is, the narrated I – there is, however, some commenting on the self right from the beginning no matter how quotidian. The narrator states, for instance, ‘I don’t like arithmetic. . . . But I like writing compositions’ (Montgomery 1985: 3). Furthermore, the narrator is able to ‘distance herself as author from herself as a character’, which is a mark of a mature writer, according to Bloom (1996: 30). Tackling the theme of potato-picking, the narrator depicts a scene from the outside: ‘It would have made a hermit laugh to have seen Lu and me as we trudged home tonight, in tattered, beclayed old dresses, nondescript hats and faces plastered with dirt and mud’ (Montgomery 1985: 2). A picture of both the narrated I and her friend is painted retrospectively with a few careful strokes.

Some more self-reflexive tones surface as the journal proceeds. For instance, it is not until the 25th entry and second year of journal writing that a brief biographical note is provided in the February 27, 1890 entry:

My mother died when I was a baby. I have always lived with Grandpa and Grandma Macneill. Father is away out west in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. He is married again. . . . I have always had a good home here but sometimes it is very lonesome. (Montgomery 1985: 17)

The narrated I blending into the narrating I – here they seem to be one – is described by a couple of short statements that situate her as an orphan adopted and raised by her grandparents and left behind by her remarried father. Despite of not providing much overt commenting, the first entries manage to paint a portrait of a persona who is dreamy, nature-loving and bookish albeit popular with her peers and has lots of ‘chums’, which highlights how even seemingly simple diary writing is involved in the process of creating a persona, as Margo Culley has noted (1985: 12).

Little by little, there appear reflections that present the narrated I as a more deeply reflecting type, as in the April 9, 1890 entry:

After school I went up for my lesson and had great fun, larking with the gang. But, after all, I believe I liked my lonely walk back best. The sky was all pale, pearly grey, with here and there a faint, blue strip. (Montgomery UJ: 28-9)

The linking of nature descriptions with this portrayal is not coincidental but shows how

the narrated I differs from others. In Montgomery's journals nature is not merely a backdrop but has a more active role, as Mary McDonald-Rissanen (2001) among others has indicated. Further on in the journal, nature also contributes to fictionalising events, scenes and characters' mind-sets (see chapter 3).

The narrator's capability in portraying the narrated I develops at a fast pace. Two months after the potato-picking example mentioned earlier, the narrator is already able to add interior reflections to the portrayal of the narrated I while simultaneously keeping the point of view at a distance. Here she depicts the scene of reciting in public for the first time in the November 23, 1889 entry:

Feeling myself grow cold all over, I rose. . . . And how I trembled! My voice seemed to be something coming through my lips that did not belong to me at all. And I had the most curious sensation of being an enormous size – as if I filled the hall! (Montgomery 1985: 5)

The language relies more on poetic exaggeration than realism and is vivid and dramatic. Scholars have noted autobiography's close connection with drama (see Hinz 1992), thus it is apt that moments of self-reflexivity in the journal parallel with public performance. Such scenes are repeated later in Montgomery's fiction, showing their compositional power. The episode of the recital that features in *Anne of Green Gables* (Montgomery 1994: 183) is one instance.

Jennifer H. Litster (2005: 97) mentions that even when keeping her very first diary²⁴ Montgomery was influenced by a literary example: Metta Victor's *A Bad Boy's Diry* (1880; spelling original), 'a comic catalogue of mischief purportedly written by "little Gorgie"', and the first of a popular series (Montgomery 1985: 402). An echo of this early influence is present for instance in the February 13, 1894 entry when the narrator quotes the book: "'Oh, mi dere diry," as saith the famous "Bad Boy"' (Montgomery 1985: 103).

Later, when working as an editor in a newspaper office in Halifax, in 1902, Montgomery dedicates a whole entry to this influential book:

Today I've laughed more than I've done for a month together. I've been reading 'A Bad Boy's Diry'. That book is responsible for *you*, my journal. 'Twas from it I first got the idea of keeping a 'diry'. . . . The 'bad boy' was, of course, my model. He spelled almost every word wrong; therefore so did I of malice prepense. He was always in mischief and wrote accounts of it in his diary. Although not very mischievous by nature . . . I schemed and planned many naughty tricks for no other reason than that I might have them to write in my 'dere diry'. (Montgomery 1985: 281; emphasis and spelling original)

²⁴I have kept one [journal] of a kind for years – ever since I was a tot of nine. But I burned it to-day' (Montgomery 1985: 1).

It is noteworthy how much the fictional book affects Montgomery's diary writing; so much so that the little journaliser alters her character in order to make the diary more interesting. Litster (2005: 98) states that for her juvenile diary Montgomery constructed an alternative identity for her diary-self based on a literary model. In other words, already at an early stage Montgomery wrote with fictional narrative patterns and influences in mind.²⁵

One of the earliest direct references to fictional models in the surviving journals is to the then popular Pansy Books²⁶ that entailed religious moral stories mainly for girls. Even the teenage entries of the journal construct an alternative identity or rather, alternative personas. In the December 14, 1890 entry the narrator describes a scene where the narrated I is forced to teach a Sunday-school class of small girls:

I did so with a great deal of inward 'sinking awayness.' My class . . . had a fearful knack of asking awkward and irrelevant questions. It all seemed like a chapter out of a 'Pansy' book – but I did not feel at all like a 'Pansy' heroine! (Montgomery 1985: 37)

The style of narration is very self-reflective. The narrating I observes both the events and the narrated I as something that can be shaped by writing and compared to fiction. Furthermore, the narrator notices that she can use fictional story patterns to her advantage – and insert them into her diary – but also thwart and reshape them.

In the above example, the narrated I is presented as a complete antithesis to the proper Christian girls of the Pansy Books. By adding humorous and ironic touches to the sentimental story patterns, Montgomery subverts the roles reserved for young girls – a technique that reaches its apex in the secret diary written by Montgomery and her friend Nora (see chapter 4). This is already an advanced use of fictional models. Whereas in the childhood diary Montgomery altered her own persona to match that of the fictional model, the naughty 'Bad boy', in the later journals fictional models are reshaped to match the effect the diary writer wishes to accomplish.

An example of the way the narrator creates romantic scenes in the surviving journal through a fictionalising eye is found in the August 26, 1891 entry:

He [Will]²⁷ and I walked back in silence. . . . Above us the stars were shining tranquilly in the clear August sky. . . . It all looked dream-like and I felt as if I were in a dream. 'Well', he said, holding out his hand – and his voice wasn't

²⁵Montgomery also had her stories and poems published in magazines at a fairly early age. Her first poem was published when she was sixteen in 1890 (Rubio and Waterston 1995: 25), two years after she had begun writing the diary that is now included in the first volume of *The Selected Journals*.

²⁶Pansy is the pseudonym of Isabella Macdonald Alden (1841-1930).

²⁷Will was Montgomery's schoolmate and love interest. He is examined more thoroughly in 2.2.

very steady – ‘good-bye. . . .’ ‘I’ll never forget you, you may be sure,’ I said, as we shook hands. . . . I went up to my room and read his letter. He said in it that he loved me and always would. I curled up on my bed after I had read it and had a good cry. (Montgomery 1985: 62; emphasis original)

This brief account of the events shows how by a few simple strokes the narrator portrays a romantic encounter. Nature description sets the scene, which is a common feature in all of Montgomery’s texts: the two lovers meet under starlight in a dream-like atmosphere. Emotional dialogue highlights the characters’ feelings and the paragraph even has a dramatic ending in the form of the heroine receiving a love letter. What actually happened is not of essence here. How events are portrayed in the journal creates its own inner truths, or as Kagle and Gramegna (1996: 39) put it, each entry becomes ‘fact’ as it is fixed on paper.

The more profound and self-analytical style in the journals coincides with a growing influence and self-conscious use of literary models. A straightforward explanation for this would be the author’s improving writing capability and more complex psychology. However, as it is known that Montgomery edited and rewrote practically the whole journal from beginning to end, relying on this kind of explanation proves wrong. Instead, the journal can be seen as an artistic whole in which the portrayal of the narrated I as a happy young girl, a badly treated step-daughter, a flirting schoolgirl and an unromantic woman serves the purpose of the journal being a complete autobiography and a meaningful narrative with a dramatic arc.

When Montgomery spends a year in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, in 1890-1891, reunited with her father and visiting his new family consisting of a stepmother and three half-siblings, the portrayal of the narrated I becomes thoroughly influenced by literary models. In addition to the dreamy but jolly schoolgirl, another kind of persona steps into the journal during the Prince Albert year. The narrated I is depicted as a lonely and badly treated heroine – quite like the nineteenth century Cinderella – suffering in the grips of an unjust stepmother.

Montgomery intensely disliked her father’s new wife, Mary McRae Montgomery, and in order to portray this dislike as effectively as possible, the narrator employs the familiar fairytale of Cinderella. The narrated I is portrayed as the enduring and modest heroine of the fairytale, who works without complaining while the evil stepmother mistreats her by favouring her own children. For example, Montgomery’s stepmother is described using ‘cutting’ and ‘insulting’ tone of voice and giving the narrated I ‘the *blackest* look’ (Montgomery 1985: 29; emphasis original).

In the entry of August 23, 1890 the narrator skilfully combines all the main elements of the fairytale. ‘The loving father’, ‘the vicious stepmother’ and ‘the wrongly treated but enduring heroine’ are all found within this entry. The father is ‘*such* a darling. His eyes just *shine* with love when he looks at me’ while the stepmother is ‘sulky, jealous, underhanded, and *mean*’ (Montgomery 1985: 29-30; emphases original). The narrator admits that ‘I came here prepared to love her warmly and look upon her as a real mother, but I fear it will prove impossible’ (Montgomery 1985: 29). She goes on to note that ‘I have been as nice and respectful to her [the stepmother] as I could be but already I find myself disliking and fearing her’ (Montgomery 1985: 30), emphasising the narrated I’s heroic nature.

The narrated I is furthermore linked to Cinderella by the way the stepmother makes her do all the household work and even prevents her from going to school. In the April 27, 1891 entry, the narrator does not find the need to hold her tongue anymore when describing the situation:

I work my fingers to the bone for her and her children and I am not even civilly treated for it. I do all the work of this house, except the washing, which she gets in a squaw to do. . . . I *love* it when father and I are alone together for a meal. We can be as jolly and chummy as we like then, with no one to cast black looks and sneers at us. (Montgomery 1985: 49; emphasis original).

The voice here is rather that of an angry, more realistically voiced Cinderella than of the classical fairytale. The wicked stepmother works as the assumed audience in the Prince Albert entries; the narrator claims she is ‘constantly afraid she [the stepmother] will sometime find and read this journal, although I keep it locked up’ (Montgomery 1985: 33).

The angry entries boldly echo the narrator’s hurt feelings and defiance towards the stepmother – the entries seem to be addressed to the nemesis articulating everything the narrator is unable to say to the stepmother directly. In fact, so strong is this hatred and so credible the portrayal of it that in an entry fifteen years later, on May 21, 1905, the narrating I still states: ‘My resentment of her [Mrs. Montgomery’s] treatment of me is as deep and bitter as it ever was – my memory of it as vivid!’ (Montgomery UJ2: 360-1). One might add that the vivid memory is thoroughly influenced by the version in the journals, since in the same entry the narrator mentions having read over the part written in Prince Albert.

Reminiscence is thus clearly influenced by journal writing and reading and vice versa. Copying and re-reading affects the way Montgomery sees her own journal and then henceforth writes in it. When reading the entries from 1919 – the time

Montgomery was copying her older diaries – one finds numerous instances where the narrator reminisces and probably reshapes older events having remembered them through the copying process.²⁸ Furthermore, in the entry of May 21, 1905 in which the narrator mentions having re-read the Prince Albert entries she concludes, ‘I should never read old records. . . . [B]ut I know I shall continue to do so at intervals’ (Montgomery UJ2: 360-1). Culley (1985: 13) notes how women from all periods read and re-read their diaries, which according to her ‘renders the self-construction and reconstruction even more complex’.

Going over the ‘metaphors of self’ (see Olney 1972) the diarist orders and reshapes both the memory of events and herself as written, something that Montgomery undertakes regularly and self-consciously. In a long entry of May 3, 1908 – included only in part in *The Selected Journals* – the narrator states: ‘Of late I have been reading over this foolish old journal from the first and seeing the effect all my various experiences have had on me much more clearly than when I lived them’ (Montgomery UJ2: 445-58) and goes on to provide an autobiographical sketch of her life inspired by reading about the events in the diary. The entry appears towards the end of the second hand-written manuscript; longer, back-glancing entries usually surface at the end of the hand-written volumes denoting their value as separate entities and documents.²⁹ It is also written during Montgomery’s long secret engagement to Ewan Macdonald when she was living with her aged grandmother and knew that after her death, she would be married and forced to leave her old home. Thus, it is not surprising that the diarist is prone to introspection especially after having read over her journal and having been aided in seeing the effect of her experiences ‘more clearly’. Reading over the journals affects the way Montgomery writes about her life in and is actually where the re-narration process really begins.

In her journal Montgomery does not always openly support the view that as a diary writer she is influenced by fictional prototypes. Returning to her year in Prince Albert in a long entry of January 7, 1910, the narrator asserts that ‘the many stories I had read of “cruel stepmothers” had not infected my mind at all’ (Montgomery 1985: 383), although it is clear that these stories are the canvas for the journal entries. It is

²⁸See for instance the long entry of September 3, 1919 (Montgomery 1987: 341-2; UJ4: 441-6). In the previous entry of September 2, 1919, Montgomery (1987: 341) notes: ‘I find that when I am copying those old journals I feel as if I had gone back into the past and were living over again the events and emotions of which I write. It is very delightful and a little sad’.

²⁹Rubio (2008: 275) notes how each of the ten hand-written journal ledgers took a shape of its own as Montgomery copied them and were books in their own right.

pivotal to notice that no matter what the author insists, in Montgomery's journals everything that is written is a matter of composition – not merely the capturing of life. The author/narrator of a diary can claim one thing and do another.

For instance, in the May 8, 1909 unpublished entry the narrator boldly declares: 'I do not want to "make" this journal any particular sort or kind' (Montgomery UJ2: 510), although it is obvious that this is not so when looking at the vast evidence found in the journals. Reading the journals as compositional practice and an artistic endeavour in itself cannot be highlighted enough, even more so when knowing their complicated editing process and the connectedness of life writing with other modes of composing for professional authors. An example towards the end of the second hand-written journal ledger from November 8 and 16, 1905, proves the point.

In these two unpublished entries Montgomery uses the trope of a rose to depict temporality and the passing of time. She writes: 'I have two chrysanthemums and a rose out. I look at my rose and I think "God's in His Heaven, all's right with the world"' (Montgomery UJ2: 376-7). Although obviously also portraying actual events around her, the narrator uses the rose as a literary device – a rose is after all one of the most common literary tropes symbolising beauty, love and even death as in William Blake's famous poem 'The Sick Rose'. A week later, the rose has bloomed and is dying: 'The mums are averaged on the rose now, for it is faded and brown and unsightly. . . . My dear dead rose! Tomorrow I must cut it off' (Montgomery UJ2: 378). The entry ends in a quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson: 'Thank God for the Ideal. "With it is immortal hilarity – the Rose of Joy"' (Montgomery UJ2: 378),³⁰ which elevates the actual rose to a symbolic level representing the relationship between the material and ideal worlds.

Even the entries that cover quotidian days are carefully constructed. As mentioned in the beginning of this subchapter, entries such as these prove the extent to which Montgomery used her journal as an artist's sketch book. She is at pains to produce an artistically satisfying whole of her journal; on May 3, 1908 the narrator sighs 'I have "written out" so many moods in this journal that it is merely repetition now, and I get ashamed of it' (Montgomery UJ2: 445-58). This artistry shows best in her depiction of romance.

³⁰Incidentally, this quotation also features in *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* (1903) by Kate Douglas Wiggin, which has often been compared to Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*.

2.2 (Un)romantic voice

During the first years the journal captures the narrated I's flirtings with schoolmates and even a love letter – probably inserted in the edited version at a later date. Right from the beginning, a subtly crafted image emerges of a young heroine who has an ironic voice and matter-of-fact attitude to love. What is interesting in these early schoolgirl romances is that they offer glimpses to the way Montgomery constructs a romantic persona in her journal. Nowhere is Montgomery's need to control the versions of truth as obvious as when she depicts love. The journals contain relatively few emotional responses to matters of the heart and while mentions of courtiers, beaux and romantic encounters such as proposals are plentiful, they almost always lack feeling, especially romantic feeling.

Some of the entries depicting romance quite possibly mirror Montgomery's own attitude toward love – which is remote and uncomfortable – but more importantly they mirror the way she wanted to be seen posthumously. Many of the romance entries are rewritten and replaced by new pages in the original manuscripts, which is a telling fact in itself, since the removed pages are the only concrete evidence of an entry having actually been rewritten. Such entries include the first portrayal of Montgomery's future husband, Ewan Macdonald, and a description of a former beau, Lewis Dystant. Montgomery had her reasons for such stern control of her romantic self – perhaps she wanted to be seen as an independent individual not at the mercy of men³¹ – but it is interesting to study how this controlled image surfaces and whether there are instances where it unveils itself.

The two first important romantic experiences for Montgomery were those with the Cavendish schoolmate Nate Lockhart and the Prince Albert schoolmate Will Pritchard. The narrator employs a similar tone of voice – mainly that of an unromantic schoolgirl – to both, but there are instances where this voice does not persevere. Both boys were important early companions for Montgomery and their names keep surfacing later in the journals when she reminisces her youth. Thus, it seems logical that there exists instances where the unromantic voice so common in the journal in general falls silent and we hear a voice that is genuinely romantic, although the later editor's hand has intervened by polishing scenes and downplaying the swooning voice of a romantic teenager.

³¹Loss of control for women in Montgomery's time was a dangerous fate, especially loss of sexual control. Examples of this can be found in the entries depicting the Herman Leard affair; see chapter 3.

The narrator depicts her relationship with Nate very openly in the early entries, such as this one from February 4, 1890: ‘I love to talk to Nate about books. There is nobody else in Cavendish who cares to talk about them’, and admits that she ‘miss[es] Nate when he is sulking’ (Montgomery 1985: 13). The innocent camaraderie changes when Nate asks *the* question: “‘Which of your boy friends do you like best?’” (Montgomery 1985: 15; emphasis original) and sends a love letter. The narrating I responds with passion by stating that ‘if Nate says he likes anybody else best I’ll hate him!’ (Montgomery 1985: 15). Here the voice is that of a rather stereotypical romantic schoolgirl, full of absolute feelings, and quite controversial compared to the strictly regulated voice of later romances. Such instances are rare glimpses of emotion in the journals and prove that the narrator – or Montgomery herself – learns to censor herself only later, whether while writing or while editing the journal.

In the next entry, February 18, 1890, however, the tone takes a full turn after the uncovering of the love letter, and the unromantic schoolgirl returns:

[F]or hadn’t that absurd boy gone and written down that he not only *liked* me best – but loved me! . . . He seemed in high spirits all the afternoon but I was as frigid as a glacier. I *am* sorry, when all is said and done, that this has happened. I feel that it is going to spoil our friendship. Besides, I don’t care a bit for Nate *that way* – I really don’t. I only just like him splendidly as a chum. (Montgomery 1985: 16; emphases original)

The word ‘love’ marks a turning point for the narrator. ‘Liking’ is acceptable but ‘love’ is a red flag. Interestingly enough, the narrated I is equalled with a ‘frigid glacier’, a metaphor that has telling sexual undertones, at least to modern readers. The narrating I is at pains to prove either herself or the future readers that she is not in love with Nate.

The tone of voice persists throughout the subsequent entries until the culmination of the relationship with Nate. On July 26, 1890 the narrator agonises, ‘the fact is, Nate is absurdly sentimental these days – or would be if I would allow it. I hate that sort of thing’ (Montgomery 1985: 24). Finally, Nate leaves for college and the narrator moodily states: ‘I was sorry to say good-bye to Nate . . . but not so sorry as I would have been if he had not spoiled our friendship by falling in love with me’ (Montgomery 1985: 24). These scathing words could not be farther from the way the narrator speaks about Nate when they are still merely friends.

Although the tone is cold and lacks romantic feeling, the narrating I nevertheless acknowledges the importance of the early relationship. In the February 18, 1890 entry the narrator states after reading Nate’s love letter: ‘I admit I *do* feel a queer, foolish triumphant little feeling about it. I’ve often wondered if anyone would ever care for *me*

– *that* way – and now someone really does’ (Montgomery 1985: 16; emphases original). More than this overt sentence, the fact that Nate’s love letter is inserted in the diary proves that it has some significance for the narrative of the journal. First, it proves that ‘sentimentality’, which the narrator asserts to hate, definitely has a place in that narrative. Second, the letter gives voice to the presumptive male lover, which only happens occasionally in the journals. Generally the voice of the narrator predominantly reigns over the narrative.

The other important early romance takes place with Will Pritchard, a brother of Montgomery’s close friend Laura and a schoolmate in Prince Albert during 1890-1891. He is a safe companion in teenage infatuation and just as Nate, first and foremost a good friend:

A new boy is going now – Willie Pritchard. He has red hair, green eyes and a crooked mouth! *That* doesn’t sound attractive and he certainly isn’t handsome – but he’s splendid. I have lots of fun with him. (Montgomery 1985: 35; emphasis original)

‘Have lots of fun’ is a typical set phrase in the journals, often used to describe social activities or mark that something is left untold. Hence, quite logically, the sentence or its variation repeatedly appears in connection with scenes of romance creating a caveat in the text. Just as with Nate, the narrator underlines the camaraderie of the relationship with Will: ‘We are just the best of friends. He always walks home from school with me and carries my books’ (Montgomery 1985: 44).

Gradually, more flirting tones emerge in the entries on Will, more so than with those concerning Nate. The narrated I is described to begin to practice the role of the flirtatious schoolgirl, even though the unromantic voice does surface eventually. The narrating I depicts how ‘Will stole my little gold ring and put it on his finger. He wouldn’t give it back but then I didn’t coax *very* hard’ (Montgomery 1985: 50; emphasis original) and how ‘he [Will] did look so cute on horseback with his little jockey cap on’ (Montgomery 1985: 55). This appealing voice disappears almost completely later in the journals and appears only in the secret diary Montgomery kept with her friend, which deliberately mocks the persona created in the early journal entries (see chapter 4).

The narrating I very carefully portrays the narrated I as a blushing heroine: ‘[W]hen Will says anything significant to me I color up and look foolish and lose my voice instantly’ (Montgomery 1985: 56). Their encounters are marked with innocent flirtation and the style of writing is humorous and not sentimental at all:

I sat down on one corner of the sofa and Will sat down on the other. . . . But there must have been something queer about that sofa because the space between us gradually narrowed in the most mysterious manner until it wasn't there at all! I'm sure *I* never moved. (Montgomery 1985: 56-7; emphasis original)

No matter how unsentimentally the relationship is presented – thus keeping it unthreatening – the author of the journal still finds it necessary to insert a paragraph at the end of the entry which makes it clear that none of this has anything to do with love: 'I *like* Will better than any boy I ever met but I *know* I don't love him – he just seems like a brother or a jolly good comrade to me' (Montgomery 1985: 57; emphases original).

The careful nature is the most important aspect of romance in Montgomery's journals. It does not stem from what apparently took place, as does nothing else in the journal, but is the outcome of thorough editing. As it is known that Montgomery rewrote and organised her journal completely on several occasions, it is more than likely that she found multiple features in it that she wished to change. Since the romance plot is the predominant one in the early journal, she most likely wrote many of the above-mentioned entries anew and tampered with the image formed in them. One must remember that even the teenage entries are actually written by a woman in her forties or older.

The constructed nature of the unromantic persona is evident in the entries after the Prince Albert year. The narrated I is presented as having mastered the newly learnt role of a cold-blooded flirt. She gives a hard time to the presumptive lovers, as does the narrating I when describing their clumsy attempts, as in this entry dated July 30, 1892:

Then Jack and I came back in the moonlight and Jack began to simmer; but the more sentimental *he* got the more saucy and independent I got. When he said he 'loved' me I laughed at him so much that he got sulky. . . . Jack doesn't 'love' me any more than I love him. It was just the moonlight. (Montgomery 1985: 81-2)

In retrospect, the narrator creates an image of the narrated I as a 'saucy and independent' person who pushes boys down from their high horses. Even the word 'love' is treated disrespectfully and mockingly, highlighted by the use of inverted commas.

The journals are also used as evidence by which the narrator persuades the readers that the blame is always on the men, as in this July 2, 1895 entry: 'I certainly, most certainly never gave him [Lewis Dystant] any encouragement whatsoever to think that I cared anything for him except as a friend' (Montgomery 1985: 141). She even makes the unfortunate male in question to repeat the testimony in the diary: 'Lou said

he loved me but admitted that I had never encouraged him' (Montgomery 1985: 141). The 'court room style' perseveres throughout the journals, as in this example from March 2, 1901:

Speaking of Henry I have disposed of him as kindly as possible. He had begun to grow foolish in spite of my strictly friendly attitude. I certainly never gave him any encouragement. He admitted that himself but said he had always loved me, long before he began to drive me about. (Montgomery UJ2: 170-3)

The phrasing is almost identical with the earlier examples and the narrated I's tactic the same. Devereux (2005: 241) notes that Montgomery indeed saw her journal as an accurate source of information and even referred to it in her will on several occasions, thus highlighting the journals' status as a legally binding document.

The above-mentioned Lewis Dystant is a good example of the narrator's skills of presenting the swooning men as insignificant to her and acting foolishly in their silly infatuations. Most of the entries depicting Montgomery's interactions with 'Lou D.' are rewritten in the hand-written manuscripts, which is always an apt clue that some earlier material has been tampered with and replaced, probably in order for them to match the main thematics of the diary and the persona of an unromantic woman. Interestingly the early references to Dystant are dispassionate – these are the rewritten entries – and pointedly not romantic at all. The narrating I lists on November 5 and 13, 1894, how 'I promised to go with Lew D. to a week-night preaching service at Tyne Valley tomorrow night' (Montgomery UJ: 339)³² and 'Lou is a nice fellow. That is, he does very well for somebody to drive me about' (Montgomery UJ: 340). Most mentions of Dystant are very matter-of-fact and exceedingly impersonal, even harsh, as in the latter quotation. Contrasted with the entries that have not been rewritten – at least that we know of – the tactic is notably different.³³ The narrator does not, of course, say anything directly but the sheer number of entries describing the narrated I's walks and drives with Dystant proves their importance. The language employed in these entries implies that once again the careful diarist is downplaying the romantic discourse.

The recurring technique in several entries is strikingly similar. First, the narrating I makes a casual comment on how 'Lou D. came out to take me', or, 'last night about six Lou Dystant's sleigh-bells jingled through the frosty air as he came to take me to a lecture', or, 'Lou came along as we left the P. O. [post office]' (Montgomery 1985: 124, 136). After the introductory sentence, a nature description

³²On this same page the original manuscript features a photo of Lewis Dystant.

³³See pages 124-142 (Montgomery 1985) that cover Montgomery's time in Bideford – where she was teaching – and include the Lewis Dystant entries.

follows that fills in the romantic gap in the scene, as in the entry of December 6, 1894:

We [Lewis Dystant and the narrated I] were soon flying up the road in a dazzle of frost and moonlight. I never enjoyed a drive more. The night was bewitching, the roads were like gleaming stretches of satin ribbon, there was a white frost that softened the distant hills and woods to a fairy dream, and the moonshine fell white and silvery over all. Earth looked like a cold, chaste bride in her silver veil, waiting to be waked by her lover's kiss to warmth and love and passion. (Montgomery 1985: 124)

Even the usual nature passage, which are numerous in the journals in general, employs a sensuous style that implements the careful 'I never enjoyed a drive more'. Towards the end of the quotation the language becomes more elaborate and daring, raising a question of whether the narrator is actually portraying the landscape or rather the narrated I and her disposition as a 'cold, chaste bride' waiting to be kissed passionately in the presence of a convenient suitor. It is not clear or even interesting if Montgomery was actually interested in Lewis Dystant or not, but the way the journal continually introduces romantic scenes with these kinds of literary techniques – such as distancing and nature metaphors – implies that what cannot be written overtly is rendered metaphorically, or as Lorna Drew (1995: 22) puts it, sexual desire is coded in landscape descriptions.

Similarly, further on when the narrator reminisces her relationships with Will and Nate, the style does not succumb to sentimentality – although the mere existence of these recollections proves that they have importance for the narrative. After seeing Nate later in life in Halifax the narrator aptly articulates in the December 21, 1901 entry: 'This is a famous chance for some sentimental reminiscences! But I shall refrain! I'm too tired – and there's nothing worth saying – and it was all in another world' (UJ2: 222-3; emphasis original³⁴).

A few months later, on February 15, 1902, the second time the narrated I is depicted as having run into Nate, the tone of the entry is similarly evasive:

On the way home from the office I met Nate. He turned and walked home with me. We gossiped inconsequentially and talked about old friends, keeping carefully to the surface of things of course. I might write several pages of reflection about this, of course. But I won't. I'll only think of them. (UJ2: 229-33; emphasis original)

This overt withholding of information is very interesting. The narrator uses a technique which leaves greater space for the readers' co-operation and imagination but also teases and irritates. Instead of arguing the case for or against – whether she still cares for Nate

³⁴Emphasis in the hand-written manuscripts is marked with underlining.

or not – the diary succumbs to silence and a veil is drawn on a seemingly too private a matter. It is noteworthy that even this kind of unconcealed informing of the reader still guides the interpretation to a certain direction and is thus a conscious tactic employed by Montgomery. By mentioning that she could write more if she wished, hinting that something is left untold, the narrator clearly guides the reader to deduct that romantic feeling is being censured.

All this fits the conclusion that the romantic identity in the journal is an artfully crafted image controlled by the author. Here lies the key to reading the earlier entries. It is as if the narrator wishes to remind us that what is not written about is as important – if not more so – as what is actually written. The myth of the intimacy of diaries proves wrong: they are based on secrets and gaps to a great degree. Culley (1985: 22) encourages the reader of a diary to identify especially these ‘silences’ in the text, that is, ‘what the diarist did not, could not, or would not write’. There are after all things in life that are too personal even for a diary.

In an entry four years later – August 6, 1905 – the voice of the unromantic woman mixes with more complex tones. The narrator contemplates Nate’s old letters and admits that

Even tonight his boyish compliments gave me one of the old pleasant little thrills, the secret joy with which a woman recognizes her power to please – a joy measured by the guage [sic] of the man. And Nate, even as a schoolboy, was worth pleasing. (Montgomery UJ2: 368-71)

Here the narrator acknowledges women’s power over men and admits that she enjoys it. This sensuality is quickly dispersed, of course, by a familiar statement: ‘I feel no interest in the Nate of to-day’ (Montgomery UJ2: 368-71) to correct any romantic misconceptions. At the end of the entry, all of which deals with Nate’s letters, the narrator continues her reassuring style: ‘I’ve got a heartache. Not for anything in particular but just on general principles’ (Montgomery UJ2: 368-71). After an entry two and a half hand-written pages long on an old schoolmate, blaming ‘general principles’ for a heartache seems almost comically understated.

Reading old letters is a common way to develop dramatic scenes in the journal. In 1904 the old letters of Will, who died young, are brought to the daylight, but the effect of reading them is quite different from that of Nate’s letters. The change of voice is consistent, however, as it agrees with the way the narrated I was presented in the earlier entries on Will. In them, flirting and love-making was important in defining the relationship. Now that Will is dead, the role of the intensively grieving lover is reserved

for the narrated I. The portrayal has violent tones that are similar with the dramatisation of Montgomery's romance with a farmer called Herman Leard depicted in entries from 1898 (see chapter 3):

As I read on and on it seemed as if a cruel hand were tightening its clutch on my throat. Yet I dreaded to come to the end of them and stop reading. It was awful – horrible. When I had read the last I fled to my room and thought for a few minutes that I would surely go *mad* if I couldn't scream out loud until I had exhausted all the feelings that were in me. (Montgomery 1985: 293; emphasis original)

The calm and evasive tone of voice depicting the effect of seeing Nate could not be farther from this wild outburst. Evidently, however, the entry's focus is more on general anxiety and depression and as such does not highlight romantic feeling.

Will is nevertheless used as an excuse to return to the romantic *parole* and flirt with the past:

I want to see him – to laugh with him – to look into his gray eyes and bring the smile to his crooked pleasant mouth – I want to talk nonsense to him – to have him talk nonsense to me – about dances and picnics and flirtations, just as he talked in his letters. (Montgomery 1985: 294)

As always, however, while stating this, the narrator quickly notes that 'I'm not thinking of *love* at all – that has nothing to do with *this* mood' (Montgomery 1985: 294; emphasises original) as if once again to make clear that even after Will's death, her view of him is based purely on friendship. These overt and recurring statements cannot pass unnoticed, they are simply too frequent and blatant.

Detachment and caution seem indeed to be the main qualifying words for defining Montgomery's depictions of romance. Why the journal is so laden with negation about love, even during the early, fairly innocent romances is a noteworthy question. Why is Montgomery at pains to try to prove that she does not care for any of the men she is involved with, whether at 14, 16 or older? Why is it the central issue? Especially when considering that the context of writing is a personal diary and not a letter to a friend, for instance, this catering for the audience is striking. As mentioned earlier, everything in the journal serves its formation as a complete narrative and unified autobiography. The image of the narrated I as an unromantic persona is thus highly logical as it highlights the importance of a later romance, that with the farmer Herman Leard. He is presented as *the* love of Montgomery's life – although even his characterisation to some extent tallies with the overall strategy. The reader, however, cannot help but get slightly irritated and confused by the narrative voice that is at times strictly unsentimental while at others overtly emotional.

One way of analysing the discordant image formed in the journals is through the concept of *persona*. Instead of examining diverse voices and trying to account for the inconsistencies, one may see what kind of persona or personas are created through these juxtaposing articulations. In short, the unromantic persona already discussed likes to flirt on friendly terms but does not accept love. She is presented as a traditional tom-boy figure who plays the game of love but is not willing to be caught. She is a player, a she-male, a flirting woman, but without sexual implications. Reading these complex and conflicting accounts of romance is disturbing because the unromantic persona disagrees with the other personas presented in the journals and because the creation of a female flirt and rogue does not conform with the expectations of turn-of-the-twentieth-century texts.

The discrepancies in the text can also be explained by the way the text simultaneously fights the hetero-normative dogma of the time and happily succumbs and adds to it. Montgomery does not write within a feminist agenda *per se* but as several other texts by women authors of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these perplexing and even misleading cracks in the text offer perspectives from which to examine what female writers were not able or did not want to mention even in their private texts. What is at play in the early journal entries, finally, is a subtle subversive strategy. Montgomery actually advocates quite a modern stance towards the romantic ideals of love, marriage and hetero-sexual romance by dismantling their power with the ambiguous and unromantic female character.

2.3 Conclusion

As the journal proceeds, the narrator of the journals does not only use fictional models and literary characters as her inspiration but begins fictionalising the diary more and more. One of the most fascinating aspects of the journal is the narrator's apparent uneasiness with romantic discourse, even though particularly in the first volume of *The Selected Journals* romance reigns over the narrative. The narrating I employs overt and exaggerated romantic language, as when depicting the two suitors theme (discussed in chapter 3). This seemingly honest and emotional discourse is actually quite void of meaning and is merely used as a mechanic stencil in order to create an authentic-sounding romantic scene. Contrasted with this parole is its complete antithesis, the unsentimental and humorous discourse and scenes that parody romantic encounters,

which feature predominantly in the secret diary of Montgomery and her friend Nora (discussed in chapter 4). It is notable that both discourses are created through fictional and dramatic means.

As has become clear in this chapter, the narrating I of Montgomery's journals loves to portray the narrated I as a romantic heroine who inflicts tragic behaviour. Montgomery's (1985: 198) journal shows that she read novels and drew ideas from them to examine herself and her life: 'It [*The Love Letters of a Worldly Woman*] is true to life, and therefore sad and tragical, as all life and all lives are, more or less'. The narrating I even overtly states how 'the only thing I can find pleasure in at present is in picturing myself as the forlorn heroine of a terribly sad life-story' (Montgomery UJ2: 217-8). Indeed, when depicting the 'love of her life', Herman Leard, the narrator abandons the unromantic persona for a while and plunges into portraying the narrated I as a true 'forlorn heroine of a terribly sad life-story'.

3. 'Down, You Vagabond of a Heart! Haven't You been Schooled into Placidity by this Time?': The Two Suitors Convention and the Victorian Heroine

As shown in the previous chapter, the narrating I builds an image of the narrated I as an unromantic but flirtatious girl and woman who has an ironic and unsentimental attitude to love and romance. As the journal proceeds, however, another version of the romantic persona is presented in relation to one of the most typical conventions in the romance tradition, that of the two suitors. Evelyn J. Hinz (1992: 210) indicates the similarities between life writing and romance by observing how both feature heroes and heroines, present society as an antagonistic force and progress in a relatively straightforward fashion from crisis to crisis toward a climax. Montgomery's depiction of the two suitors affair employs all the features mentioned by Hinz and take the fictionalisation begun in the early entries of the journal to a next level.

One of the main plots in the journal is indeed the romantic plot intertwined with the portrayal of the narrated I – and sometimes even the narrating I – as a romantic character. All the other descriptions of romantic encounters and feelings in the journals are constructed only to give more resonance to the most important presentation of romance – the story of the two suitors, in other words Montgomery's secret engagement to her second cousin Edwin 'Ed' Simpson and her equally secret simultaneous relationship with a farmer Herman Leard, which is covered extensively in the entries from 1897-1898. In short, the narrator first creates a portrait of the narrated I as an unromantic persona in order to make the two suitor theme and its passionate tones seem more powerful and dramatic within the journals' narrative.

While passion is a key word in the entries covering Montgomery's romantic entanglements, the conscious author is still ever-present in them. Montgomery (UJ2: 248-50) writes in an unpublished entry of June 30, 1902 – a few years after the culmination of the romance with Leard: 'Down, you vagabond of a heart! Haven't you been schooled into placidity by this time?' Thus, she notes how the heart should and will be regulated by reason, continuing that 'you [heart] have no business to rise up and make a to-do because you are aching. We've all got to ache'. Placidity thus persists as the qualifying word in Montgomery's romantic portrayal of the self although now conflicting with more intense aspects.

3.1 Previous readings of the two suitors theme

The two suitors theme has been discussed extensively by Montgomery scholars, most importantly by Helen M. Buss (1994) in her essay ‘Decoding L. M. Montgomery’s Journals / Encoding a Critical Practice for Women’s Private Literature’. Irene Gammel (2005a) in “‘I Loved Herman Leard Madly’: L. M. Montgomery’s Confession of Desire’ and Mary Rubio in her biography *Lucy Maud Montgomery: The Gift of Wings* (2008: 87-103) also write at length of the presentation and historical facts of this time period. With these different readings in mind, I will examine Montgomery’s presentation of the events, more precisely the entries of June 30 and October 7, 1897 and January 22 and April 8, 1898, of which the last one is the longest and most laden with detail of the Herman Leard affair.³⁵

All of these entries are written in retrospect, long after the actual events occurred and with a respite of approximately three months in between them. In addition, remembering that Montgomery edited and re-narrated her journals, the entries seem more like interrelated and carefully constructed chapters in a novel than diary entries. As Buss (1994: 91-2) notes in her essay on the basis of Jean E. Kennard’s study *Victims of Convention* (1978), it is fundamental to treat women’s journals not as simply mimetic but rather as texts that employ literary conventions in a sophisticated and subversive way. She continues that ‘diaries, as places of improvisation, experimentation, and collation, make use of all the discourses that a writer knows’ (Buss 1994: 83), a pivotal point especially in relation to Montgomery’s journals, although it must be noted that they can hardly be seen as improvised.

Buss’s and Gammel’s readings of the above-mentioned entries are quite different in having parallel but fundamentally diverse foci. In her article, Buss seeks a critical practice for reading Montgomery’s journals with the aid of speech-act theory, Kristevan notions of textuality and feminist autobiography theories. Buss (1994: 87-89) begins with a reading of the entries that is mainly interested in decoding the writer’s psychological state. Keeping in mind her position as a reader, Buss (1994: 90) as it were reveals the skeletons in her own ‘literary closet’. Dissatisfied with her first reading – in which ‘a corrective to too great an emphasis on psychological readings of private literature’ existed and where she had ‘assumed a certain naïveté, even in a practised

³⁵All of these entries are included in the first volume of *The Selected Journals*, a fact that is not without significance in itself. The editors clearly acknowledge the importance of these romantic entries to the life story of Montgomery.

writer, because of the use of the diary format' – she tries again and finds in Montgomery's writing a sophisticated use of that most dominant of nineteenth-century literary conventions, the two suitors convention (Buss 1994: 90). Buss then re-reads the story with the matrix of this convention in mind and concludes that Montgomery, for whom the writer's identity is the most important, uses the literary convention in order to subvert her enslavement in patriarchal ideology (Buss 1994: 97).

Gammel on the other hand offers a more biographical account of the events. She traces down historical facts of the silenced male lead of the story, Herman Leard, visiting actual scenes in Lower Bedeque, Prince Edward Island³⁶ and interviewing people who still have knowledge of the affair. In other words, Gammel (2005a: 129) tries to fill in the gaps in Montgomery's account of the events which eschews revealing the 'full story'. With a scrutinised analysis of the journal entries Gammel (2005a: 131) concludes that what Montgomery ultimately accomplished with her version of the affair was disguising her discomfort with sexuality.

Neither of these essays, although offering invaluable readings of the journal entries and fascinating details of the historical circumstances, really discuss the two suitors convention and how it is presented in more detail – not even Buss, who is the first scholar to notice the use of this convention. In my reading of the presentation of the affair, I will refute the assumption that one should draw conclusions of the psychological state of the writer – which Buss tries to do to some extent – or the nature of her sexuality – which is Gammel's main argument. Without denying that readings of this kind may be of some interest, I propose that analyses in this vein are not very fruitful. Instead I will analyse the amount to which the third character in this love triangle, Montgomery herself, or rather the textual narrated I, is as constructed a character as are the two suitors. According to Gammel (2005a: 138), this new self is Montgomery's sexual self. I would rather claim the opposite. The narrator of the journals paints a picture of a main character with characteristics very much resonating the Victorian archetypes of the 'suffering heroine' and the 'fallen woman', which only hint at sexuality in a subtle way.³⁷

What is the two suitors convention like and where does it stem from? Buss

³⁶Lower Bedeque is where Montgomery was working as a teacher and boarding in the Leard homestead in 1897-1898.

³⁷Montgomery scholars are often at pains to excavate the truth about Montgomery's sexuality – whether she was lesbian or asexual – trying to prove her 'normality' and explain the gaps that exist in her journals when it comes to sex; see for example Urquhart (2009). As I try to argue in this thesis, one should not conclude much of Montgomery's sexuality based on her writings, whether autobiographical or fictional.

(1994: 90-2) offers a thorough overview of the history of the practice. She observes that both herself and Montgomery were raised on romance through the literature of domestic prose, which consists of the belief that in the centre of women's self-development is finding the right kind of man (Buss 1994: 90-1). Gammel (2005a: 129) articulates the convention as 'the popular courtship plot of dropping Mr Wrong for Mr Right'. Buss (1994: 91) goes on to quote from Jean Kennard's study, which centres on showing how 'from Jane Austen to Erica Jong, we keep getting ourselves reappropriated into patriarchal linguistics and cultural practises' by the two suitors convention.

According to Kennard, the biggest quagmires in this convention for women novelists are the tropes of victimhood it offers in which 'maturity is seen to consist of adjusting oneself to the real world which is synonymous with becoming like the right suitor' (Kennard 1978: 12). Buss (1994: 92) adds to this tradition the romance novel's ending in marriage which conflates the heroine's self-development with her role as wife.³⁸ Apparently the only possibility to write female characters out of this convention is to let them die, as Buss (1994: 92) observes, using examples from Emily Brontë and Virginia Woolf. One can come up with several other instances of this phenomenon in novels such as Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* (1899) or Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* (1905).³⁹

Kennard (1978: 10) also criticises the tendency of studies written during the time of her book – the 1970s – to treat literature as simply mimetic, documenting human experiences, without paying attention to the literariness and conventions novels might entail. This apt criticism can be extended to reading autobiographical texts, especially since the convention Kennard discusses can easily be found in Montgomery's journals.

Montgomery's novels at least seemingly submit to the tradition of the two suitors⁴⁰ and even in her journals the main character does eventually marry, although not to either of the two suitors. Is there anything subversive, then, in her employment of the convention in the diary? In Buss's (1994: 92-3) opinion, the subversive aspects are evident in the way Montgomery changes the convention at the level of plot and character and intertwines the main narrative with others, mainly that of her development as a writer. I am not completely convinced of this reading, especially because Buss does

³⁸It is noteworthy that Montgomery herself not merely as a journal writer but as a novelist was stuck with this conventional plot ending. She was often frustrated by having to 'marry her characters off' as that was what her audience and publisher expected; see Rubio (2008, 1992).

³⁹Indeed, the main character of the journals, Montgomery, did apparently commit suicide, although her death might have been caused by an accidental overdose of drugs. See for instance Rubio (2008) for more discussion.

⁴⁰However, cf. Rubio (1992).

not scrutinise Montgomery's ways of changing the conventional plot. In contrast, my reading of the entries points to a direction where the destabilising effect of the two suitors convention resides in the type of language used and the way the whole affair is fictionalised. By depicting romance with over-the-top language and presenting the narrated I as a Victorian heroine, Montgomery renders the convention disruptive by underlining its artificial nature. As discussed in chapter 2 in reference to the narrated I's teenage romances, the narrating I simultaneously unsettles and succumbs to the hetero-normative romance plot.

There are not many later instances in the journals where romances are described – Montgomery's account of her marriage is highly pragmatic and has been edited several times – thus the prominence and weight of the two suitors plot cannot be ignored. Being a female author in the late-Victorian era, Montgomery was well aware that even her most autobiographical text, the journal, would be read through the romance matrix and she wanted to be in command over its description.⁴¹ The hyperbolic and staged qualities of the story further support this reading.

3.2 Death, rebirth and 'Mr. Wrong'

Although threads leading to the two suitors story can be found as early as 1892, when the narrator first mentions meeting her cousin Edwin Simpson – to whom she later becomes engaged and who is one of the two suitors – it is not until the entry in June 30, 1897, that the narrative begins. This entry occurs towards the beginning of the second hand-written volume, which marks a break in the narrative of the whole journal and is a new entity in itself. A new kind of persona is being born and created through writing. The narrator overtly contemplates the change in herself while writing an account of the events in retrospect.

Interestingly, the narrating I states that 'I do not know if I can write down a lucid account of the events and motives that have led me to this' (Montgomery 1985: 187). Later in the journals the retrospective style becomes such a commonplace practice that there is no need for a caveat of this type. The entry is dedicated to describing the other

⁴¹I am aware that cultural and social conventions restricted what Montgomery was able to write in her journals – hence the lack of descriptions of sex or physical contact – but I want to advocate a reading of the text in which she is in control and conscious of what is written rather than being merely in the mercy of the conventions of her time. This is not, however, a prerequisite for trying to find the author's motives.

suitor, Ed Simpson, who is presented as ‘Mr. Wrong’ and it recounts Ed’s courting the narrator, finally proposing to her, the narrator’s growing repulsion towards him and her realisation that she has made the wrong choice by accepting his offer.

What strikes me as most interesting in this entry are not the actual events but the narrator’s portrayal of them. The entry begins with a burial of the narrator’s old self and a creation of a new persona. The narrating I lucidly distances herself from the narrated I. For the first time in the journals she acknowledges how the two can never coincide in the text:

The girl who wrote on June 3rd is as dead as if the sod were heaped over her – dead past the possibility of any resurrection. I cannot realize that *I* was ever *she*. And indeed, I was not. . . . *I* am not Maud Montgomery at all. I feel as if *I* must have sprung suddenly into existence and *she* were an altogether different person who lived long ago and had nothing at all in common with the new *me*.
(Montgomery 1985: 186-7; emphases original)

The narrating I seems to have trouble describing the narrated I in a traditional way. This is marked by the continuous contrasting of the pronouns ‘I’ and ‘she’, which are also emphasised in the text by the use of italics. The text reflects on the dissonance of the I in the past and the I in the writing moment, or perhaps the I in the text and the I in the real world, to the extent that the narrator admits that ‘what or who I am now I do not know’ (Montgomery 1985: 186).

Interesting in this passage is also the imagery of death and rebirth. The narrator goes as far as pronouncing the death of the old narrating I – describing a more fundamental change, for it is not only the passive narrated I who has changed – by stating that ‘the girl who wrote on June 3rd is . . . dead past the possibility of any resurrection’ (Montgomery 1985: 186). She acknowledges that first, even the writing I of the journals has changed, and second, that she has altered so drastically that a new persona for both the narrating and narrated I must be created. Although there is no hope of resurrection for the old I, a new one has already emerged, since the narrator mentions a ‘new *me*’ who has ‘sprung into existence’ (Montgomery 1985: 186). Fundamentally at work here, then, is the creation of a new fictional persona who is needed in order to narrate the two suitors plot. The narrator marks the break from the old personas and advances to describe the adventures of a romantic heroine in the midst of a turbulent affair.

While describing the beginning of her relationship with Ed, the narrator offers a portrayal of the narrated I and her romantic history. According to the June 30, 1897 entry, she has ‘never *really* loved anyone although [she has] had several violent fancies’

(Montgomery 1985: 187; emphasis original). The statement strikes the reader of the journals as odd, for nowhere in the earlier entries can this be observed. Instead of descriptions of ‘violent fancies’, the entries paint a picture of a flirting, fancy-free girl who plays with men and expects a similar carefree and frivolous attitude from her beaux. As discussed in the previous chapter, love is never at issue in the early journal entries, quite the opposite. Thus, it is easy to agree with the narrator’s claim that ‘it was not in me to love as *some* people seem to do in real life and *all* in novels’ (Montgomery 1985: 187; emphases original).

Since the narrator is constructing a certain kind of romantic portrait of the narrated I, the best explanation for the inconsistency is that if there were any entries that dealt with the ‘violent fancies’ they were most likely edited later and deleted by Montgomery in order to give more prominence to the two suitors story.⁴² Buss (1994: 93-4) also draws attention to the literariness of Montgomery’s account by observing how she refers to the act of writing by herself and others. An example of this tendency is for instance the above mentioned quotation where the narrator states that it was not in her to love as people do ‘in novels’ (Montgomery 1985: 187).

To return to the entry of June 30, 1897, in which only one of the two suitors, Ed, is described, the narrator does not understate his negative qualities. He is overtly portrayed as ‘Mr. Wrong’ in every possible way: he is ‘conceited’, ‘self-conscious’, ‘a restless, nervous mortal’ who twitches and talks too much and even causes ‘physical repulsion’ in the narrated I (Montgomery 1985: 188-9). In order to maintain the tension in the story, however, the narrator acknowledges that Ed is nevertheless clever and ‘looked well’ (Montgomery 1985: 187). The narrated I’s characteristics are accorded with his: ‘I reminded myself that I could not expect to find him perfect when I was a very imperfect creature myself’ (Montgomery 1985: 188), which resonates with Buss’s observations on how the two suitors convention equals women’s self-development with the right man.

The entry accomplishes to tell more of the narrated I, however, than of ‘Mr. Wrong’. The picture of her is built with the aid of Victorian stereotypes of the tortured heroine who has made the wrong choice and now has to suffer in silence: ‘I went up to my room saying under my breath “God help me”’ (Montgomery 1985: 190). Noteworthy is also how throughout the entry the narrating I describes the narrated I in retrospect, using the ‘first-person actually masking the third-person’ technique of

⁴²See for example the discussion in chapter 2 on Lewis Dystant.

narration discussed by Shari Benstock (1988: 19-20). Thus, the narrated I is seen from the outside and marked with Victorian Gothic attributes: ‘I was as pale as a corpse, with black circles under my dull tired eyes’ (Montgomery 1985: 190).

The narrated I is also portrayed within the tradition of the tragic consumptive heroine with clear physical clues easily recognisable to readers familiar with this tradition: ‘My eyes were burningly bright, my cheeks hot and crimson’; ‘I am thin and pale, hollow-eyed and nervous’ (Montgomery 1985: 192-4). These qualities underline the heroine’s tragic characteristics although the reader knows she is not actually sick. The consumptive heroine is a highly literary motif, one with which Montgomery was more than familiar, having read about it in novels, experienced it in real life and written about it in her own novels.⁴³ As Melissa Prycer (2005: 262) notes, consumption was one of the most prominent literary metaphors of the nineteenth century. The narrated I is *like* a consumptive heroine, beautiful in her suffering.

Furthermore, the style and setting of the entry are highly influenced by romantic conventions. The language is similar to the hyperbolic language of Harlequin novels – ‘Saturday morning I got up . . . with the hot, defiant passion of the previous night burned out to dull white ashes’ (Montgomery 1985: 192) – although it simultaneously employs more powerful and violent images drawn from the gothic tradition:

I could strike my reflected face there in the mirror – I could lash my bare shoulders with unsparing hand to punish myself for my folly. It would be a relief to inflict physical pain and thereby dull my mental agony. Sometimes I drop my pen and walk wildly up and down my room with clenched hands. (Montgomery 1985: 194)

The narrating I wants to punish herself with physical pain and depicts the narrated I as an archetypal female gothic heroine with clenched hands walking up and down her room. Lorda Drew’s (1995) article on Montgomery’s Emily novels’ connection to Ann Radcliffe’s well-known gothic novel *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) discusses aspects of what Drew terms ‘the female gothic’, most of which feature in the two suitors entries. According to Drew (1995: 19), the female gothic includes an engagement with nature and alternative worlds manifested in dreams, fantasies and visions and can be understood as a gothic sub-genre that documents female uneasiness with the social order.

What is more, the way the setting and the surroundings of the heroine are

⁴³Montgomery’s mother and childhood friend died of tuberculosis. In her novels there are several characters that suffer from consumption such as Emily’s father in *Emily of New Moon* (1923) and Ruby Gillis in the *Anne* series.

depicted reflect her misery in true gothic-romantic fashion: ‘It is dark outside now and the rain is beating on the pane like ghostly finger-tips playing a weird threnody’ (Montgomery 1985: 194). The weather changes according to the mood swings of the narrated I, and as if to further underline this, the narrating I states: ‘[I will] feel that in a world of beauty and gladness I am only a black unsightly blot of misery’ (Montgomery 1985: 195). It is noteworthy that this misery is in accordance with the portrayal of ‘Mr. Wrong’: It is almost obligatory that the narrated I is described as miserable because the entry is dedicated to depicting the narrator’s relationship with Edwin Simpson,

After this lengthy entry follows another one in which the two suitors plot is suspended. The entry of October 7, 1897 instead concentrates on inner contemplation of the narrating/narrated Is. The narrator states:

I have learned to look below the surface comedy of life into the tragedy underlying it. I have become *humanized* – no longer an isolated, selfish unit, I have begun to feel myself *one with my kind* – to see deeper into my own life and the lives of others. I have begun to *realize* life – to realize what someone has called ‘the infinite sadness of living’. (Montgomery 1985: 195; emphases original)

Once more an entry begins with self-reflection whose effect is much greater than merely offering insights into the narrator’s mindset and development. Rather, what is at play here is subtly providing guidelines to the reader. The narrator overtly states how the story will shift from comedy to tragedy, which seems to denote that it will become ‘deeper’ and more objective, since the narrated I is now connected to other people, humanity and life in general. An important marker is the final quote of ‘the infinite sadness of living’ which, if nothing else, transfers the narrative to the realms of a sad life story.

Again, nature is presented as reflecting this story mode and the mood of the narrator: ‘But it is autumn and beautiful as everything is it is the beauty of decay – the sorrowful beauty of the end’ (Montgomery 1985: 195). Indeed, what follows is the entry of January 22, 1898 that foreshadows the appearance of ‘Mr. Right’. The tragedy stems from the unachievable culmination of that love.

3.3 Enter ‘Mr. Right’

The January 22, 1898 entry is a bizarre one. It is laden with gaps, hints and foreshadowing and is controlled with an iron fist by the writer. It is a retrospective entry

that describes Montgomery's winter 1897 spent teaching in Lower Bedeque boarding with the Leard family, who were prominent farmers and well respected in the society. During this time, she became acquainted with Herman Leard, the eldest son of the family, while being secretly engaged to Edwin Simpson.

As already mentioned, the two suitors theme begins in the narrative long before the other suitor – Herman – even enters the stage. Similarly in the January 22 entry mentions of Herman are scarce but the narrator carries the story forward by carefully placed enigmatic sentences that tease the reader:

Marriage is a different thing to me now. I have at least realized what a *hell* it would be with a man I did not love – and yes, what a *heaven* with one I did! Where and how have I learned this last, question you? Ah, I can't tell you that yet! (Montgomery 1985: 203; emphases original)⁴⁴

Herman and Ed, the reader knows after having read the whole story, are juxtaposed as heaven and hell and they are positioned in relation to marriage, quite appropriately within the two suitors convention. The narrator directly addresses the reader only to inform her that information is withdrawn and postponed. The passionate romance with Herman, the culmination of the story following in the next entry, is only hinted at to build up suspension – again very much a literary technique.

Curiously enough, for one who does not know what will follow, the narrator discusses a marriage of an 'ancient spinster' she knew in Belmont who apparently has a precarious past.⁴⁵ The narrator asks, 'I wonder what a woman *does* feel like who has such a past as hers. Is there any sweetness in the memory of her sin – or is it all bitterness?' (Montgomery 1985: 203; emphasis original). This is another instance of foreshadowing, only more subtle, which hints at the narrator's own almost sinful behaviour that will be narrated in the subsequent entry. Thus, it is possible to observe how exceedingly complicated Montgomery's plot construction is. The narrated I has already been presented as the Victorian suffering heroine in relation to Ed. In the entry of April 8, 1898 what is created is a presentation of 'the fallen woman' foreshadowed by discussing an actual example of one in the January 22 entry.

Due to the enigmatic foreshadowing in the January 22 entry, the following long entry of April 8, 1898 seems to tell the whole truth of the two suitors affair and reveal everything, when in fact it is as constructed as the rest of the narrative. In the January

⁴⁴Here Montgomery's awareness of her audience is evident. Why would she postpone information from herself that she already knows? In fact, it is the future readers that she is addressing.

⁴⁵Belmont is a village where Montgomery taught school before Lower Bedeque. Montgomery (1985: 165) writes about the woman's, Jessie Fraser's, past in the previous entry of October 27, 1896.

entry, Herman is mentioned but only in passing: ‘The elder boy, Herman, is about 26, slight, rather dark, with magnetic blue eyes’ (Montgomery 1985: 203). The narrator is careful not to say too much and only states that when she first met Herman she didn’t think him handsome but ‘in the end one thinks him so’ (Montgomery 1985: 203). The entry ends in a curious remark in which the narrating I mentions that the entry is like “the play of Hamlet with Hamlet left out”,⁴⁶ and she ponders whether she will be able to narrate it again with Hamlet in it (Montgomery 1985: 204).

After a two-month gap in the journal, the narrator begins the April 8, 1898 entry with a style that resembles a witness’s testimony: ‘I am going to write it out fully and completely, even if every word cuts me to the heart’ (Montgomery 1985: 204). She assures the reader that it is ‘a faithful record’ (Montgomery 1985: 204).⁴⁷ What follows is an account of the death of her grandfather and her relationship with Ed. It is not until the fifth page in the published version of the entry (Montgomery 1985: 208) that the narrator begins recounting the actual affair with Herman. However, even before that there are hints along the way in which the narrator calls Herman ‘the other man’, not yet revealing his real name (Montgomery 1985: 206). Suspension is tactically employed again before the climax of the story – indeed, perhaps of the whole journals.

Again, the entry begins with a description of the setting – ‘the shadows have gathered thickly over the old white hills and around the old quiet trees’ (Montgomery 1985: 204) – and it re-introduces the heroine of the continuing story. Rebirth is described once more, although by now the qualifying attributes are already familiar from the previous entries. She is a ‘pale, sad-eyed woman’, a ‘new creature, born of sorrow and baptized of suffering, who is the sister and companion of regret and hopeless longing’ (Montgomery 1985: 204). The narrated I is even equated with the narrator’s (or Montgomery’s) dead mother by a lengthy reminiscence of the narrated I seeing the mother lying in the coffin and touching her face (Montgomery 1985: 205). This is a link to the previous entries in which the narrated I was portrayed as a consumptive heroine – Montgomery’s mother died of tuberculosis – and forms a parallel by its remarks on dying and rebirth.

After describing the memory of her dead mother, the narrator mentions her grandfather’s funeral and then lapses into a rambling section of writing, which is almost

⁴⁶According to the notes to *The Selected Journals*, this is a misquote from Walter Scott (Montgomery 1985: 408).

⁴⁷This kind of style that claims legal accuracy is familiar from Montgomery’s earlier accounts of romance; see chapter 2. The April 8, 1898 entry is indeed a complete record as it is 38 hand-written pages long.

the only instance of uncontrolled writing in the entries on the two suitors. Not surprisingly, this section is omitted from the published journal because it stops the flow of narration and seemingly does not move the story onward. However, it offers a rare insight into the act of writing in which the narrating I seemingly loses control over the threads of the story.

These two paragraphs surface in the middle of an otherwise carefully structured narrative. The narrating I comments on her narration and acknowledges that what is being written is indeed a story, not the truth or a reflection of real life. The tone is almost metafictional:

I must stop this wild wondering – the echo of my confused, troubled thoughts – and begin my story – pick up the dropped threads and go on with it – this miserable life story of mine that can never have a happy ending. (Montgomery UJ2: 40-78)

Since this is the only instance in the depiction of the two suitors affair where the narrator overtly admits the constructed nature of the narrative – ‘this miserable life story of mine’ – and the style of writing is improvisational and even impressionistic, it would be tempting to conclude that here one is able to get a peek behind the mask of the writer, or Montgomery.

However, this seemingly random part of the entry also builds into the narrative whole. The rambling thoughts of the narrating I are like an interior monologue of the suffering, gothic heroine encountered in the earlier entries:

I could lie down tonight and die, unregretfully, nay, gladly, if I were sure that death indeed meant rest and was not merely the portal to another life – such a one as this perhaps – or a better – but at all events life – and, that means of action and thought and feeling – perhaps memory as well – anything but the rest I crave. (Montgomery UJ2: 40-78; emphases original)

The fact that the topic of her contemplation is death is not surprising as it tallies with the theme of death, rebirth and tragic love. After this outburst, a stanza from Longfellow’s dramatic poem *The Golden Legend* is quoted in which the speaker of the poem – Prince Henry – sighs in a similar vein to the narrator of Montgomery’s journal: ‘Rest, rest! Oh, give me rest and peace!’ (Montgomery UJ2: 40-78).⁴⁸ Longfellow being an American poet of the romantic period, the narrating I quoting him in the middle of a narrative highly influenced by the romantic tradition is more than fitting.

After all the suspension in the narrative flow in the April 8, 1898 entry, one

⁴⁸Montgomery quotes the stanza almost correctly. Only on one line ‘weight’ has turned into ‘night’. See <http://infomotions.com/etexts/gutenberg/dirs/1/0/4/9/10490/10490.htm>, November 15, 2009, for the whole poem.

sentence marks the beginning of the plot which features Herman, or ‘Mr. Right’. The narrating I states: ‘Now for “Hamlet” with Hamlet in!’ (Montgomery 1985: 208). Indeed, what follows resembles Shakespeare’s dramas more than a diary entry. The overall presentation of the affair is very dramatic. There are markers guiding the reader throughout the entry such as ‘it [eleventh of November] marked the *first step* on a pathway of passion and pain’, ‘the next Union night Herman went a step further’, and, ‘I went in like a girl in a dream’ (Montgomery 1985: 209, 211; emphasis original).

The two suitors are also symbolically juxtaposed as reason (Ed) and emotion (Herman). Interestingly, this common binary opposition is not used to position male and female qualities but two male characters. The characteristics of the two suitors are evident in this example of passion: ‘*Ed’s* kisses at the best left me cold as ice – *Herman’s* sent flame through every vein and fibre of my being’ (Montgomery 1985: 209; emphases original). Passion is a key word in the entry on the whole. By describing strong physical desire the narrator contrasts Herman with Ed, for, as mentioned previously, in the entries depicting Ed a total opposite of passion is represented. Now instead of feeling physical repulsion, the narrated I is described experiencing physical attraction, which paves way to the portrayal of the fallen woman. Sexuality is very much present in this entry, but in a true Victorian fashion it is hindered and pictured as dangerous, especially for the woman. A common tradition in art and literature of the nineteenth century, ‘the fallen woman’ trope suits the narrator’s needs perfectly.

Next, the setting of the story is given. The secret lovers ride the buggy coming back from church meetings and engage in intimate scenes in the sitting room or the narrator’s bedroom. Gammel (2005a: 136) notes that the rhetoric of Montgomery’s journals is obsessed with frames and boundaries. The same can be said of the settings of the secret romance which are like stage sets in a play: the horse carriage, the sitting room, the bedroom – all confined and framed spaces.

The characters are then presented – especially Herman who until now has barely been mentioned. He is ‘a very nice, attractive young animal’ who lacks any intellectual qualities (Montgomery 1985: 208). According to historical details, Montgomery’s portrayal of Herman as a simple farmer is not accurate (see Rubio 2008 and Gammel 2005a). However, in the journals he is a character who has to fill certain characteristics for the benefit of the story. It is noteworthy that on the whole, and especially when compared to the portrayal of ‘Mr. Wrong’, the depiction of Herman is brief. As Gammel (2005a: 138) notes, Herman’s representation is characterised by having been completely silenced. In comparison, Ed is marked by his speech; the narrator mentions that Ed

‘spoke well’, his letters are quoted in the diary, he has ‘the Simpson habit of talking too much’ and even some dialogue is attributed to him (Montgomery 1985: 187, 207, 189, 192).

Herman remains silent throughout the narrative and is only characterised through negation. The narrator does mention that he is ‘dark-haired and blue-eyed, with lashes as long and silken as a girl’s’ (Montgomery 1985: 208), adding an androgynous touch to his character, but directly after this depiction makes it clear that he has ‘no trace of intellect, culture, or education’ (Montgomery 1985: 209). Throughout the entry of April 8, 1898 and in any subsequent entries mentioning Herman, this view is repeated. The narrating I creates a myth of her lover which serves the purpose of the overall narrative of the journals. In that myth Herman is a simple, narrow-minded farmer who is not marriage material. In the entry of July 10, 1898, for instance, the narrating I depicts Herman’s letter as being not very clever and having some visible lapses of grammar (Montgomery 1985: 224). What is Herman’s role, then, if he is portrayed with so many qualities that would better fit ‘Mr. Wrong’? Despite his apparent unfitness and lack of heroic qualities, Herman has sexual power. He has a face that is ‘elusive, magnetic, haunting’ and there is something ‘wonderfully fascinating in [it]’ (Montgomery 1985: 208-9). This suitor thus clearly stands for the sexual power in the story.

While the entries that describe the narrating I’s relationship with Ed portray the affair through rationality, for Herman the narrator adapts an entirely different tone. The narrating I is struck by a spell and by the ‘irresistible *influence* which Herman Leard exercised over [her]’ (Montgomery 1985: 209; emphasis original). She is possessed by a power that is ‘indescribable and overwhelming’ (Montgomery 1985: 209) – a remark that does not quite tally with the lengthy description of the powerful passion that follows. Hence, what is noteworthy in these examples in addition to their physicality is the narrated I’s lack of control, as in this passage:

I *loved* Herman Leard with a wild, passionate, unreasoning love that dominated my entire being and possessed me like a flame – a love I could neither quell nor control – a love that in its intensity seemed little short of absolute madness. Madness! (Montgomery 1985: 210; emphasis original)

The narrating I is possessed, thus beyond reason or self-control. She is equated with a madwoman or a hysteric who tries to break the boundaries of the Victorian society and

demonstrates sexual desire that other women cannot express.⁴⁹

Again the gothic elements play an important role in describing the narrating I's sexuality. She leads a 'double life', rather like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in R. L. Stevenson's novella, and the narrator even exclaims that 'what I suffered that night between horror, shame and dread can never be told. Every dark passion in my nature seemed to have broken loose and run wild riot' (Montgomery 1985: 212), further underlining the duality of human nature. Sexuality needs to be implemented in the story – it is the *primus motor* – but the narrating I cannot describe it without the aid of a literary formula that moves the threatening phenomenon to a safer level. The gothic style and convention fit perfectly the ideology of passion as something 'dark' and shameful and a trait in the human being that is to be controlled and not let loose. As Drew (1995: 22) aptly articulates, coding female desire in ways that do not manifestly relate to the love story is one of the main functions of the female gothic.

In the portrayal of the affair, then, the norms of Victorian society are kept intact. Although the narrated I does not ultimately succumb to the dangerous passion, she is nevertheless presented through the canvas of the fallen woman, which adds a moral to the story. Extramarital female sexuality leads to misery and ruin is the message here: 'I would fall over the brink of the precipice upon which I stood into an abyss of ruin' (Montgomery 1985: 214).

Although the narrated I is over struck by passion she cannot control, the narrating I keeps the threads firmly in her hands. Instantly after the description of her 'unreasoning love' to Herman, the narrator begins explaining the affair logically. Her explanation culminates in the claim that Herman is unfit to be her husband and that their marriage could never work (Montgomery 1985: 210). Despite this obvious drawback the narrated I is presented as helpless within Herman's power and continues the relationship. She is depicted as a spoiled heroine who has 'moods' and sits sulking on the sofa when Herman does not notice her. But it is not until the key scene of the story, where Herman and the narrated I are in the bedroom and Herman apparently suggests intercourse, that she almost becomes the fallen woman.

This scene of 'almost falling' is very artfully inscribed through gaps and hints. The couple is cuddling on the bed, 'the candle [is burning] low' and things go almost too far. Herman is depicted as requesting something from the narrated I. The reader is not told what he actually asks for but within the context of the love making scene it is

⁴⁹A common example of this kind of madwoman is Mr. Rochester's first wife in *Jane Eyre* (1847) by Charlotte Brontë.

easy to fill in the blanks. The narrated I is dangerously close to becoming a fallen woman and her reaction is depicted accordingly:

I cowered down among my cushions in an agony of shame. Oh, what had I done? What had he said? Was it possible that things had come to such a pass with *me* that only a faintly uttered, hysterical 'no' had stood between me and dishonor? (Montgomery 1985: 215-6; emphasis original)

Important markers here are the narrated I's shamefulness and the borderline between dishonour – sexuality – and respectability – struggling with her desires.

The scene is repeated, only now the narrated I's sexual desires are brought vividly to life as 'the most horrible temptation swept over me' (Montgomery 1985: 217). As the language becomes more heated with the rising tension, the narrating I becomes more elaborate in her portrayal of the events. Herman's breath and kisses are 'burning' (Montgomery 1985: 217) and the narrated I 'feel[s] those kisses now, burning on wrists and fingers' and 'can feel his arms tighten around me, the warm pressure of his dear curly head on my breast' (Montgomery 1985: 216). What follows is a sequence of scenes that depict succumbing and withdrawal and the narrated I's inner fight between passion and rationality.

The narrated I almost yields twice and both times she is described being 'tempted'. However, she does not yield and the narrating I offers a highly rational explanation to the outcome of this struggle. According to her, it is not tradition, training nor consideration of right and wrong that keeps her from transgressing the line (Montgomery 1985: 217). It is not even 'fear of the price the woman pays' (Montgomery 1985: 217), which is the only overt reference to 'the fallen woman' theme. Ultimately, the reason that is given is that the fear of Herman Leard's contempt saves the narrated I from disgrace: 'If it had not been for that I realize that I would have plunged recklessly into that abyss of passion, even if my whole after life were to be one of agonized repentance' (Montgomery 1985: 217).

Although subverting some of the social norms of the time, the narrator still adheres to the ideal of the romance tradition, in which the woman acts in order to please the man and fears his judgement and abandonment. Contradictingly, the narrating I also depicts the narrated I claiming to have the ultimate power over the situation by stating that 'pride – and perhaps rationality – was equally strong [as passion]. I could not stoop to marry a man so much my inferior' (Montgomery 1985: 218) thus adding to the myth of Herman being an unsuitable match for marriage.

There is a strange tension in the text between succumbing to the traditional way

of portraying passion and aiming for a more modern depiction. To a modern reader at least, something is at odds in the narrator's explanation of the supposedly real reason for not having had sexual intercourse with Herman, especially when it is contrasted with the portrayal of Herman as her inferior. Montgomery seems to be at the borderline of writing a daring and realistic depiction of woman's sexuality that should be allowed to be expressed even with a man she claims not to regard as her future husband. Apparently, she dares not to write it and hides this depiction under a more acceptable and safe version laden with Victorian conventions.

Gammel (2005a: 136) observes that Montgomery's (or the narrated I's) sexuality operates within the classical Victorian gender codes: 'he takes the initiative, she reacts; he desires, she yields'. This is very true and also follows closely 'the fallen woman' tradition. Gammel continues to claim that Montgomery is daring and modern in depicting female arousal within a context where she has no intention to marry her partner. Finally, she asserts that Montgomery is 'in fact quite shameless in claiming her sexual desire in her journal' (Gammel 2005a: 136).⁵⁰ While I agree, I would draw a distinction in the level of the narrating and narrated Is. The narrator is indeed daring in her portrayal of female sexuality, albeit using literary conventions and fictional models to understate the message. However, the characterisation of the narrated I is fairly traditional with her feminine reactions to Herman's advances. To conclude, one can say that the language employed is sensual and erotic, the actual events are daring and laden with sexual passion, but the heroine of the story is portrayed as a typical Victorian heroine who fights against falling into the abyss.

The affair ends as the lovers have one final scene where the narrated I once again declines Herman's temptations and is portrayed as the tragic heroine in a similar vein to the previous entries: 'I left him standing there in the moonlight and went up to my room – alone – *alone* – as I must henceforth be!' (Montgomery 1985: 220; emphasis original). Familiar qualities are attributed to her such as sleeplessness and 'mental misery' and she is 'thin and pale' (Montgomery 1985: 218). The story of the two suitors has a dramatically fitting ending in which Herman Leard dies of pneumonia and the narrated I breaks off the engagement with Edwin Simpson and finally marries a third man, Ewan Macdonald.

As an apt postscript to the story, the narrating I describes in the entry of July 24,

⁵⁰Gammel (2005a: 131) suggests in reference to the joint diary written by Montgomery and her friend Nora Lefurgey that Montgomery 'covered her discomfort with sexuality by excessively masquerading the flirtatious role'.

1899 reading about Herman Leard's death in the paper. His death is a proper conclusion to the affair for now Herman is hers 'as he never could be in life' and 'no other woman could ever lie on his heart or kiss his lips' (Montgomery 1985: 240). Yet another dramatic and chillingly gothic scene is depicted where the narrated I kneels by her window, re-lives the events of the affair and dreams of being in the coffin with Herman 'with all pain and loneliness lost forever in an unending, dreamless sleep, clasped to his heart in one last eternal embrace' (Montgomery 1985: 241), thus returning to the imagery and style of the previous entries. Edwin Simpson does not disappear as smoothly to the realms of death but returns to haunt the narrator several times by coming to preach in Cavendish where she lives.⁵¹

3.4 Conclusion

As a kind of postscript to the fascinating narrative in Montgomery's journals I conclude this chapter by drawing attention to the different existing versions of the two suitors affair. First, there are the original hand-written journals on which my reading is based and where Montgomery offers the longest and most detailed description of the events. The first published volume of *The Selected Journals* includes most of this material, save for the omission of one paragraph mentioned earlier. Examining the different versions is important in order to highlight the constructed quality of Montgomery's autobiographical writing. Montgomery develops and alters the story according to a changing audience, whether it is herself, her sons or her pen-friends. Furthermore, the vast amount of different versions supports my reading of the two suitors affair as one of the main narratives in the journals.

In addition to the version in the journal there is a thoroughly abridged account of the affair in the typescript of the diary that Montgomery prepared for her sons. In the typescript much of the material from the hand-written journal entries has been left out and Herman's name is never mentioned – he is simply called X (Montgomery TS: 21). Unlike the original entry in the hand-written journal, the typewritten entry is clearly a manipulated version in which the narrator comments on the text, mentions that omissions have been made and even places the word 'omission' in brackets. She states for example:

What follows is a condensed account of what happened that spring. The entry in

⁵¹See for example the October 8, 1900 entry (Montgomery UJ2: 155-8).

my original diary cannot be written here. I shall present the bare bones of it. I made a terrible mistake and paid the penalty of my folly in intense suffering. (Montgomery TS: 3a)

It is understandable that certain details have been censored in this version, because its audience are Montgomery's sons. However, much other material in the typescript has been left intact, which suggests that Montgomery saw the entries depicting the Herman and Ed affair as something that was not only volatile but something that needed editing.

What is more, in this version of the affair – written in retrospect in the 1930s when Montgomery started preparing the typewritten version of the journals – Herman's lack of intellect is further underlined and the narrator plainly states that 'I could not marry such a man' (Montgomery TS: 21). The myth of the simple farmer-lover grows, showing the narrated I as the one with power in the relationship, especially when the typescript version omits all references to sex or passion between Herman and the narrated I.

There is another version of the events, an even more public account, found in a letter Montgomery wrote to her long-time pen-friend George Boyd MacMillan. This version was written in 1907, earlier than the typescript version, after Herman's death, but before Montgomery's marriage. It is revealing because the audience is different. A pen-friend is less intimate than Montgomery's own children, as in the typescript, but by contrast more immediate for a letter is read as soon as it arrives. In the epistolary version the narrator does not mention any names, but interestingly enough offers an even clearer variant of the two suitors theme. The two men are juxtaposed by the narrator marking them A (Herman) and B (Ed), without mentioning their names. By describing their qualities, she answers a question posed by MacMillan in a previous letter.⁵²

In this version, maybe for the sake of argument, Herman's bad qualities are described with striking hyperbole. The narrator states that 'I did not *admire him in the least*. . . . I would not have *married* him for anything' and that 'he had no brains, no particular good looks, in short, nothing that I admire in a man' (Montgomery 1980: 28-9; emphases original). Hence, one can notice how a myth begun in the journals continues and grows in other contexts and how the assumed audience affects the versions of the two suitors affair.

In short, nothing highlights a diary's fictional nature better than knowing that

⁵² 'Do you think that love depends upon an admiration for qualities possessed by the loved one? Or is it something more subtle than this?' (Montgomery 1980: 28).

some important historical details have been left out of it. Mary Rubio (2008: 100-3) in her biography of Montgomery adds yet another level to the story of the two suitors by illustrating that it was not really a triangle drama between Ed, Herman and Montgomery.⁵³ Instead it was a double triangle with Herman Leard being engaged to a woman called Ettie Schurman as he was secretly courting Montgomery. Some details in Montgomery's account of the events might be better understood read in the light of this revelation,⁵⁴ but what is more telling is the fact that Montgomery does not mention any of this in her journals. According to Rubio (2008: 101), she must have known of Herman's engagement to Ettie Schurman and was understandably jealous. Whatever the motives behind the real-life Montgomery writing in her journal, it is clear that for literary reasons there was no room for the other woman in the passionate love story with two suitors and a suffering heroine at its centre.

⁵³Gammel (2005: 142-152) has also discussed this aspect.

⁵⁴See the quotation mentioned above where the narrator states: 'No other woman could ever lie on [Herman's] heart or kiss his lips' (Montgomery 1985: 240). This is one of the few overt references to another woman and might indicate Ettie Schurman.

4. Flirtations and Mock Romance in the Secret Diary of Nora and Maud

After examining the intensely romantic and passionate account of the two suitors affair, Montgomery's secret co-authored diary offers an exceedingly contrasting portrayal of romance – one that is full of satire, scorn and ridicule. It also manifests new personas of the narrated I, some of which resemble the (un)romantic schoolgirl of Montgomery's teenage journal entries, but in a notably altered tone. In this diary, hyperbole and humour denote angrier voices and social criticism that rarely appear in the personal journals. Furthermore, the slapstick comedy and carefree language of the diary define romantic encounters between men and women anew, thus highlighting the gap between this not so public record and Montgomery's own personal journals.

Not only in Montgomery's journals is the effect of the assumed audience of vital importance but especially so in the diary written by Montgomery and her good friend Nora Lefurgey. This secret diary is a peculiar document. It was written between January 19 and June 25, 1903, and is thus linked to a certain period of time, namely that which Nora spent boarding with Maud and her grandmother while teaching in the nearby Cavendish school. Following Steven E. Kagle and Lorenza Gramegna's typology (1996: 55), the secret diary is clearly a diary of situation (see chapter 1). Jennifer H. Litster (2005: 99) notes that 'like an account of a journey or a vacation, the collaborative diary has a finite span from its inception and therefore a predetermined plot'. Together with a predetermined plot, the theme of the diary – writing mockingly about flirtations, men and romance – is chosen intentionally by the two authors.

What is more, the diary's status among the plethora of existing Montgomery documents is unique. Unlike the personal journals, Montgomery did not include this diary in the legal-sized ledgers. The original notebooks containing the secret diary are either missing or more likely destroyed by Montgomery, but their contents survive in the typescript Montgomery prepared for her sons. Even in the typewritten version, however, the entries copied from the secret diary are crossed over, indicating that Montgomery was possibly not going to include them in the final version of the typescript. Nevertheless, Litster (2005: 89) and Gammel (2005c: 20) have noted that it is probable that Montgomery copied the diary in its entirety, since longer gaps are usually explained and, for instance, the misspelling of Maud's name as Maude – with its humorous indications – is left intact. An annotated version of the secret diary was

finally published in 2005 with a collection of essays in *The Intimate Life of L. M. Montgomery*, edited by Irene Gammel. The diary was first introduced to a wider audience of scholars in 2002⁵⁵ by Litster, whose essay on the secret diary I will make use of in my discussion.

4.1 Audience in the secret diary

The secret diary is a co-authored diary in the sense that the two writers – Nora and Maud⁵⁶ – take turns writing an entry. Sometimes there are two entries of the same day from both writers, but more often each covers a day. Hence, the diary is more than anything else a joint endeavour, a diary of dialogue, private jokes and secrecy. Nora and Maud are thrust into a writing battle where they taunt each other to more and more daring jokes and mischief. Quoting Litster (2005: 99), ‘they compete as diarists just as much as they compete in love’. Furthermore, the audience in this secret diary is more pivotally present than in Montgomery’s personal journals because Nora is both the other author and the other reader. As mentioned by Litster (2005: 99), the fact that both women were writers cannot be overlooked,⁵⁷ and it is evident that both authors are dependent on the other’s writing for inspiration. What comes across in the secret diary is thus a ‘dialogue between two pens’ (Litster 2005: 99).

Albeit for its secrecy, the diary is nevertheless a more public document for Montgomery compared to her personal journals when one thinks of audience. As Margo Culley (1985: 11-12) has noted, the sense of audience has a crucial influence over what and how is said. In the secret diary, the audience – most importantly Nora – is more immediate, shared and co-operative than in Montgomery’s journals. Unlike the journals, in the secret diary the future reading audience is less important and less present, since the diary was not by any means intended to be published or even seen by others. In it there is a scene where Nora is described collecting the pages of the diary after having been startled by an unexpected visitor,⁵⁸ indicating that the diary’s existence was to be kept a secret. Also puns and the use of code names suggest a shared intimacy between

⁵⁵According to Irene Gammel (2005b: 9), this was at the International L. M. Montgomery and Life Writing Symposium.

⁵⁶Here I call Montgomery Maud in order to highlight the more intimate character created in this diary compared to the authorial persona of the journals.

⁵⁷Nora Lefurgey also kept a private journal and wrote an unpublished novel (see Litster 2005: 99).

⁵⁸‘I went to interview Nora who was running about gathering up the sheets of this self-same volume which she had scattered in her flight’ (Montgomery TS: 123).

the two authors. For example, the narrators keep referring to ‘birdology’ and call the various courtiers by names of birds, such as ‘the three jays’, ‘Rob-in’ or ‘Hen-ry’ (see Montgomery and Lefurgey 2005: 60). Litster (2005: 94) points out that secrecy was understandable knowing the conservative Presbyterian community’s attitude to frivolousness. The scarceness of references to the collaborative diary in Montgomery’s personal journal proves that the diary remained secret in other respects too (Litster 2005: 94).

The assumed audience affects the tone and style of the diary right from the beginning making it very ironic and sarcastic. Intention also plays an important role in the style chosen for the narrative. As Montgomery notes in her journal, Nora and she started the diary ‘for sport’s sake’ and wanted it to be

of the burlesque order, giving humorous sketches of all our larks, jokes etc. and illustrated with cartoons of our own drawing. In short we set out to make it just as laughable as possible. . . . Nothing could be more ridiculous than its pages. (Montgomery 1985: 287)

Hardly anything is taken seriously in the diary and both writers employ a carnivalesque style mocking the surrounding society, especially their courtiers and each other. As the definition of burlesque suggests,⁵⁹ this kind of writing style is used to subvert social norms and power structures and, taken its dictionary meaning, to make a parody or satire of them. Unfortunately, only the text survives as the cartoons Montgomery mentions are lost with the original notebooks.

The main theme of the diary is making fun of men and romance in general. The numerous beaux who drive Nora and Maud to countryside events, such as prayer meetings, and the narrators’ mock infatuation to them is described in an embellished and parodying language as in this entry written by Nora:

Bro. William called to inquire for me this eve and of course that cheered my palpitating heart. . . or rather that part of my anatomy which answers to a heart. for since I met Dear James. . . tears. . . well, words are inadequate. What is an aching void? For three weeks I have been trying to find out and now at last, oh glorious revelation! Maude’s hollow tooth and my headache. (Montgomery TS: 114; omissions and spelling original)⁶⁰

The use of expressions such as ‘palpitating heart’ and ‘oh glorious revelation’ which are familiar from romance novels or religious texts are downplayed by humorous

⁵⁹‘The term burlesque may be traced to folk poetry and theater and apparently derived from the late Latin *burra* (“trifle”). . . . Put simply, burlesque means “in an upside down style”’. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burlesque>, February 11, 2010.

⁶⁰Although the diary is published in Gammel (2005c) I refer to the typescript version as there are some misspellings and errors in the published version of the diary.

combinations, such as the very mundane ailments of toothache and headache.

Unlike Montgomery's personal journals, the secret diary does not seem to have a specific literary precedent,⁶¹ although Litster (2005: 99) points out that there are some superficial similarities with Kate Douglas Wiggin's mock travel book *Penelope's Experiences in Scotland* (1898). Despite not having a clear literary model it is easy to notice resemblance between the diary and popular girls fiction of the time, or even earlier epistolary tradition. Although not consisting of letters as such, the diary and its entries are like letters in many respects, with the fellow diarist as an addressee who will read the entry after it has been composed. Even when the other woman, the addressee, is not present at the writing moment – both Nora and Maud visit and are absent several times during the composing of the diary – the author of the entry still writes for the other, knowing that the entry will eventually be read by her. The two authors react to each other's entries and comment on them in subsequent ones. Maud snorts at Nora's earlier account saying that 'I don't think her entry shows her to have been very grateful' (Montgomery TS: 126) or makes a note on how their writing styles affect each other: 'Well (I've caught that word from Nora)' (Montgomery TS: 127).

Despite the epistolary qualities in the diary, there is a further complication to the question of audience. That is to say the audience does not consist merely of Nora and Maud but also of a textual 'third eye' that both are writing to, in addition to each other. This omnipresent narratee is needed in order for the sarcasm to work. If the two diarists wrote directly to each other – as in, 'Dear Maud/Nora' – the humour would be more direct because they could react to ridiculous events and stories immediately. However, in the diary, the 'unnamed external audience' (Litster 2005: 100) is like a villager to whom the roles of the diarists can be played out with mock seriousness which then results in the parodying effect. Litster (2005: 101) draws attention to the dramatic aspect of the diary calling it 'life writing that dramatizes rather than narrates events'.

It is noteworthy that Nora and Maud never address each other directly as in '*you* are away' but always in the third person. Hence, Maud writes that 'peace and quietness reign in the household of Macneill tonight for *Nora* is away' (Montgomery TS: 118; my emphasis). A fact that might seem insignificant actually shows how the diary convention is used for a humorous effect by the two writers – and by no means accidentally or unconsciously. As both Nora and Maud were semi-professional journal writers, it is safe to assume that they were more than familiar with the conventions that came with the

⁶¹As mentioned in chapter 2, Montgomery's childhood diary was inspired by Metta Victor's *A Bad Boy's Diary*.

medium.

Even though ultimately writing to each other, Nora and Maud employ the ‘dear diary’ convention by addressing a third narratee, as in this example:

[N]ever mind, I’ll fix Miss Maude. I hereby swear that I will tell yes, sister, tell, every male creature that comes to this house that she lost her garter!!! I will! I stole her garter, indeed! I wonder what she tried to steal from me while I was away! (Montgomery TS: 118; emphases original)

Interestingly enough, the narrator (Nora) addresses both Maud and the assumed narratee. One could insert ‘dear diary’ after ‘never mind’ and equate ‘sister’ with Maud. On the other hand, ‘sister’ might refer to the omnipresent addressee, exemplifying the fascinating sisterly ambiance in the diary.⁶² Culley’s (1985: 11) point on how “‘dear diary’ is a direct address to an ideal audience: always available, always listening, always sympathetic’ proves valid in the secret diary for indeed, the sympathetic diary narratee seems constantly to be on the side of the author of an entry, a tactic that both Nora and Maud vastly employ to a humorous effect.

4.2 Irony and humour as subverting strategies

Despite the sisterly ambiance – or rather, because of it – the entries in the diary play with and ridicule the stereotypical feminine roles of the time and the code of conduct that defines them. Just as the burlesque, this is a subverting strategy that is not employed only because it gives pleasure but in order to empower the writer. As Canadian women’s voice in 1903 was still largely a domestic one without much power to change the rules of society or their own status,⁶³ women used private texts to gain some standing by commenting on the society they lived in. Mary McDonald-Rissanen (2001: 5-8) writes in her Licentiate thesis on Prince Edward Island women’s life writing that in local newspapers and later histories, women have been treated as ‘written subjects’ rather than ‘writing subjects’ and their role as fundamental parts of the society has been ignored.

⁶²After all, most girls’ and women’s diaries using the ‘dear diary’ convention are either named after a female or addressed to one. Probably the most famous example of this is Anne Frank’s diary that is addressed to Kitty.

⁶³Legally, women were not considered ‘persons’ in Canada until 1929. Women were granted the right to vote in federal elections in 1922 and those who owned property in towns had the right to vote in municipal elections between 1888-1892 – rural women did not have this right until 1913 (see McDonald-Rissanen 2001: 11-12). General suffrage for all women – excluding First Nations – was granted in 1919.

Continuing the discussion Felicity A. Nussbaum (1988: 136) claims that since diaries and journals are usually not published, they have the potential to subvert the public scrutiny of publication. What is more, ‘the marginalized and unauthorized discourse in diary holds the power to disrupt authorized versions of experience’ (Nussbaum 1988: 136). Especially when dealing with women’s diary writing, this aspect cannot be overlooked and it shows thoroughly in Nora’s and Maud’s dealing with their surrounding society. McDonald-Rissanen (2001: 43) notes how keeping a diary offered women a literary convention where they could reach out of their silence and play with the male-dominated discourse in creative ways. During Maud’s and Nora’s time, the authorised version of experience was to a great extent in the hands of men and the secret diary offered a much needed space for dismantling this authority.

Maud and Nora lived in a small Presbyterian countryside community where everybody’s – men’s as well as women’s – behaviour was strictly regulated by unspoken rules and even more strictly observed by the people of the community. Suzanne L. Bunkers (1988: 194) has noted that the technique that most female diarists employ is self-editing and self-censoring. This technique of encoding – ‘the transmission of the writer’s message in an oblique rather than in a direct manner’ (Bunkers 1988: 194) – is used, according to Bunkers, in order for the writer to maintain a perceived sense of self in the text. She continues that although this kind of encoding is by no means unique to women’s writing, it is however more common in texts of writers who have to suppress their ideas or who have been denied the right to speak (Bunkers 1988: 194). Self-editing and censoring is very much present in Montgomery’s personal journal and analysing it following Bunkers’ ideas would prove fruitful.⁶⁴ Also, as most older private diaries from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries are full of gaps and silences, the process of decoding is inevitable.

However, analysing the secret diary one cannot help noticing that a slightly different strategy of encoding is at play. For Bunkers (1988: 194-5), encoding is a way of ‘breaking silences’ and finding ways to speak directly or indirectly about what has remained unspoken. In the secret diary, Maud and Nora’s strategy is rather holding on to the silences, but not by self-censoring or editing. Instead they highlight the unspoken in the society, not by speaking about it, but by ridiculing it. As they write, Nora and Maud employ all the proper Victorian language codes but manage to draw such attention to the language used that it becomes ludicrous. For instance, Maud mentions in several entries

⁶⁴See for example McDonald-Rissanen (2005).

‘the aforesaid garments not mentionable in polite society’ when discussing a lost garter (see for instance the January 22 and 26, 1903 entries, Montgomery and Lefurgey 2005: 26-7). By repeating the sentence the reader’s attention is drawn to it to such extent that the parodying effect is evident.

Nora and Maud also jokingly compete in this language game. Maud writes about ‘Literary’, a social meeting where papers were read and discussed, and comments on a man’s outlook:

Father Pierce presided and I think he must have been praying in a very muddy spot, judging from the knees of the garments that clothed his nether limbs. (Nobody would think of legs in connection with Pierce.) (Montgomery TS: 131; emphasis original)⁶⁵

Again, attention is drawn to the ‘unmentionable’ by mentioning it. Talking of ‘nether limbs’ instead of ‘legs’ and adding a further comment in brackets simultaneously portrays Father Pierce as a supposedly morally superior person and mocks the moral conventions of the society. In the next entry, written by Nora, Nora continues the joke and pretends to be Maud’s moral superior: ‘[Y]our humble servant was ensconced on the sofa with her extremities (suppose Miss L. M. would say legs!) elevated on a chair’ (Montgomery TS: 132). Leona Toker (1993, as quoted in McDonald-Rissanen 2001: 43) notes how some gaps in women’s writing do not merely stem from aesthetic reasons but are ‘a response to a language that had not been shaped by women’s experience’. Both Nora and Maud make ruthless fun of the Victorian paranoia with certain words and concepts such as legs, garters, petticoats and, ultimately, sex.

Maud’s and Nora’s response to male-centred language is clear. They bluntly fill the gaps with Women’s Experience with capital letters. There are several examples of the subverting strategy in the diary. The main theme of the diary – romance or rather a mock version of it – is a never-ending source of making fun of the unspoken in the society. One of the most unspoken concepts is sexuality and the moral codes that surround it. Montgomery (1985: 378) writes in her personal journal about her Sunday School teachers’ attitude to ‘matters of sex’ which is ‘something necessary but ugly – something you were really ashamed of, although you had to have it – or go to hell!’ Women were not considered sexual beings in the nineteenth-century Presbyterian community and Nora and Maud draw attention to this and to the double standard restricting men and women’s behaviour on several occasions.

Maud writes for example: ‘He [Maud’s escort] informed us that one young lady

⁶⁵Father Pierce or Pierce Macneill was a local moral guardian, according to Litster (2005: 96).

who was there had a blue bow on. The inference being that she had nothing else I blushed' (Montgomery TS: 115; emphasis original). Underlined words in the diary⁶⁶ denote an ironic tone of voice and are used extensively to mark private jokes and puns. Here the underlining of the word 'blushed' gives it a double meaning in which the narrator portrays the narrated I as a proper lady all coy and innocent confronted with a daring joke and simultaneously makes fun of this role. Nora continues this strategy by describing a scene where the assumed roles of mothers and unmarried women are juxtaposed: '[T]he baby wet Maggie's apron. Oh dear me, I do not know how. . . I suppose it spilled water on it. The act did not damp her maternal enthusiasm however' (Montgomery TS: 145; omission original). By staging the role of a seemingly clueless single woman, Nora makes fun of the expectations of the society and motherly figures as well.

Another continuing comment of the silencing is the yellow garter joke which employs many of the strategies mentioned above. Nora has supposedly stolen Maud's yellow garter – although it is strongly hinted that it is one of Maud's courtiers who has taken it – and for several entries both writers employ the case of the missing garter in order to tease each other. Litster (2005: 95) mentions that, fittingly enough, in North American folklore yellow garters were believed to be good luck symbols and ensure marriage if worn constantly from Easter Monday. Since nothing in the secret diary is unintentional or without double meaning, the main idea behind the garter joke can be traced back to this symbolic aspect.

Much of the humour, then, stems from the irony of garters and other 'unmentionable garments' constantly being referred to in the diary and, as Litster notes (2005: 95), Maud especially mentions the unmentionable to all callers. Nora writes that 'I heaved a sigh of relief when Mrs. C. came to the house for I thought surely delicacy would keep that yellow article out of sight' but unfortunately, 'Maude, with that delightful candor that is so characteristic of her, informed Mrs. C. that I had stolen her garter' (Montgomery TS: 117). The talk about 'that dreadful article of female attire' (Montgomery TS: 118) is daring but again, what is at play here is drawing attention to that which should not be talked about.

Religion is another recurrent theme that is parodied in order to subvert it. Living in a society where religion set most of the rules and was still the major force guiding people's lives, it is not surprising that as much as moral rules are made fun of, so is

⁶⁶These are italicised in the published version, see Montgomery and Lefurgey (2005).

religion. Nora and Maud portray themselves as good – almost too good – Christians, especially Maud with her church duties, but as can be expected, the two diarists have ‘some difficulty in keeping [their] wayward feet in Sunday line’ (Montgomery TS: 120).

Unsurprisingly, the aspect of ridiculing is ever present. Nora writes: ‘Although it is Sabbath eve, “A feeling of hate comes o’er me that my soul cannot resist”’ (Montgomery TS: 122; emphasis original). She is depicting a boring ride back home with one of the suitors and interestingly enough, although fake, the angrier tone that surfaces in relation to it being ‘Sabbath eve’ juxtaposes the proper conduct expected of Sunday evenings and the reality. Nora finishes the entry by returning to the obedient role, ‘I will stop for I am sure this is Sabbath-breaking’, although in brackets she states that ‘(I don’t care if it is Sunday night I will say a “cuss word” for it is only one thousandth of what is inside me[.]’ (Montgomery TS: 122).

In Maud’s entries references to religious discourse and the Bible are as common as they are in her personal journals. However, in the secret diary the tone is notably different with hardly any serious note: ‘Nora and I are in desperate want of someone to take us to the party and have gone around all day singing this doleful ditty. “Oh, for a man. . .a man. . .a man. . .A man. . .sion in the skies”’ (Montgomery TS: 124; omissions original). Gammel (2005c: 55) notes how in the entry of March 7, 1903 (TS: 130) Maud parodies the Bible, something that would have probably been unheard of if committed publicly. These examples show that both writers know the subject matter well and are thus able to make fun of it.

Some angrier tones surface when Maud writes about walking to a Baptist prayer meeting⁶⁷ with ‘snowing, blowing and slush to our knees’ (Montgomery TS: 135) and connects the dreary walk with a wish of having stayed home and ‘read my “expurgated edition” of Adam Bede’ (Montgomery TS: 135). She continues:

Right here I might remark that Nora has been poking fun at me because of this. She thinks it quite a good joke apparently. But I do not care. I think when one is pure-minded one should endeavor to remain so and not risk their soul reading such dreadful books as ADAM BEDE in the original!!! (Montgomery TS: 135)

A comment that might sound earnest is seen in another light when connected with additional information about the local authorities’ attitude to George Eliot’s book. According to Litster (2005: 96), in a 1890’s Literary Society a local minister had said that George Eliot led an immoral life and her works were not safe to read, especially for

⁶⁷Religious events such as prayer and missionary meetings were almost the only social events in the rural areas of Prince Edward Island.

the young. Maud evidently refers to this earlier comment when she vents her anger by staging the role of an obedient and pure-minded young woman in a mocking way, as signalled by three exclamation marks, and connects this portrayal with the frustration of having to frequent prayer meetings in bad weather.

In a similar vein, Nora attacks a topic on which women have traditionally had little to say – the supposedly true view of the female nature. In a few entries the narrator (Nora) portrays the narrated I as a stereotypical hysterical female. The first is in the presence of a doctor:

The doctor was standing by the bed with his arms loosely folded over the broad convexity of his stomach, idly watching the ‘hysterical’ female in pale blue, tossing and groaning on the bed when sharp and quick rang a pleading voice from without. . . ‘draw the blind’. (Montgomery TS: 115; omission original)

The scene is depicted from the position of the ‘male gaze’ with the conventional powerful male – a doctor with a fat stomach suggestive of his wealthy position – looking at the objectified female ‘tossing and groaning’. The narrating I distances herself from the scene so that the narrated I becomes more of a caricature whose portrayal serves as a commentary on the way female behaviour is categorised by the male authorities. ‘Hysterical’ being inside inverted commas further supports this reading.

The second example describes the effect of seeing one of the beaux, thus bringing hysteria from the medical discourse to the realms of everyday romance:

My heart jumped as it generally does on such occasions. It did not come into my mouth however, as it is accustomed to do in most ‘hysterical females’ the reason being there was no room on account of some choice ‘cuss words.’ (Montgomery TS: 122)

Combined here are two portrayals of femininity. The narrator juxtaposes the assumed way of conduct – heart jumping and hysterical excitement – and the reality – cursing. The ideal is undermined by the reaction of a more realistic female character and that is where the humour stems from too. Such examples prove that both Nora and Maud are more than familiar with the common medical and religious language of the day and the engendered stereotypes they create and support.

The theme most ridiculed in the diary, however, is romance and marriage. Both journalisers use conventional language of romantic fiction with a mocking tone in order to underline the theme of the secret diary – making fun of men. Nora describes a scene with one of the beaux and does not hold back her sarcastic comments:

I tried my very best to appear interested and when he asked me if I would like to

be a missionary I said ‘yes’ and clasped my hands in an ecstasy of delight as the vision arose before me of Jerry⁶⁸ and I away in western lands teaching the Indians, but somehow it was no use. (Montgomery TS: 125)

The two writers clearly deride the assumption that women are thrilled merely by the attentions of a man. Maud writes in unison: ‘James dear favoured us with a call Friday afternoon. . . . How my heart went pitty-patter when I heard his well-known footfall’ (Montgomery TS: 132). Expressions such as ‘clasp one’s hands in ecstasy’ or ‘heart going pitty-patter’ are hard to take seriously especially when the two writers’ attitude towards love is so obviously mocking.

Besides making fun of men, Nora and Maud make fun of the assumption that the existence of women during that time was supposed to evolve around securing a husband. Nora’s tongue-in-cheek comment serves as an example: ‘I forgot to say we had our fortunes told during the eve and mine turned out to be an “immediate marriage” so that is encouraging’ (Montgomery TS: 125). There are also a few references to the belief that sleeping with a piece of wedding cake under one’s pillow would make one dream of the future spouse (Gammel 2005c: 84): ‘I ran out to give Bob a bit of wedding cake and he drove off with the remark that he hoped he’d dream about me. . .’ (Montgomery TS: 146; emphasis and omission original). As in the yellow garter joke, folklore of this kind mirrors the attitudes of the time. Marriage and marriage alone was the acceptable goal for women. So be it then, Maud and Nora seem to signal in their diary taking this idea to an exaggerated level. The diary is full of beaux and boy talk but the irony stems from the contrast of portraying the narrated Is as ‘man crazy’ while simultaneously depicting the men as complete fools.

One of the ‘leading men’ is James Alexander Stewart who is mercilessly made fun of throughout the diary. Maud remarks in one of the early entries that ‘our only resource has been to discuss the soulful James in all his aspects. He has more than replaced the garter’ (Montgomery TS: 121). Equating James with the lost garter not only objectifies the man but also makes his significance to be that of a joke. Nora and Maud compete over his attention while it is evident that the poor man is a shy and awkward type and neither of the two women is really interested in him. James, as all the other men courting them, has his fair share of nicknames – the Soulful, James Alec, the Soulful One – and provides much amusing material for the writers: ‘When James begins to look sentimental out of those soulful orbs of his it is enough to make one turn

⁶⁸The beau in question is Jeremiah S. Clark who worked as a missionary to the natives (Gammel 2005c: 33).

Mohammedan or Mormon' (Montgomery TS: 127).

Nora and Maud point to the bitter irony of women having to fight over suitable husband candidates even if those men do not possess intelligence or wit. Maud depicts a dialogue with the Soulful James that underlines this fact:

Nora wouldn't talk so I had to. If I stopped there would be a horrible silence and after vainly racking my brains I would at last remark, 'We've been having some storms lately.' And James would respond, 'Yes, the moon is in her last quarter.' (Montgomery TS: 126)

Following the sharp social satire of Jane Austen, the diarists underline the ridiculousness of the rules and conduct of society by trivial and awkward dialogue. Depicting the dullness of entertaining the prospective suitors, the secret diary suggests that after all, married women are still higher on the social ladder than spinsters, however much fun the unmarried women might have in their pursuit.⁶⁹

It is noteworthy, however, that although the secret diary seems more honest than the thoroughly edited and re-written personal journals of Montgomery, it is nevertheless a narrative constructed by the two authors. Lynn Z. Bloom (1996: 24-5) summarises this by saying that 'once a writer, like an actor, is audience oriented, such considerations as telling a good story, getting the sounds and the rhythm right . . . can never be excluded'. As mentioned earlier, the collaborative diary has probably not been too extensively edited by Montgomery when copied to the typescript, except for the omission of the pictures.

Still, the entries in the secret diary are dramatic constructs and as Litster (2005: 98-99) suggests, seem to be written with a literary purpose, 'to write a skit, possibly, of rural life for girls of marriageable age'.⁷⁰ This is an important point to remember so that too a simple reading can be avoided. Although some portrayals of the men in the secret diary might have a hint of truth in them, the male characters generally serve the purpose of butts of jokes in a narrative highlighting the heroines' wit and commenting on gender inequality in society. Montgomery evidently has the habit of depicting characters in her journals in a way that suits her own narrative purposes.⁷¹

⁶⁹Out of Montgomery's books the one that most deals with this inequality is *The Blue Castle* (1926).

⁷⁰Indeed, maybe this is one of the reasons why Montgomery did not see the need to edit the diary too thoroughly.

⁷¹See for example chapter 3 in reference to Herman Leard.

4.3 Role play, drama and the private/public dichotomy

Litster (2005: 101) points out that both Nora and Maud ‘adopt a variety of roles to serve their plot’ and that each have a defined role to play. They create a diary persona, or rather several personas, who vary from funny and frivolous flirts to obedient God-fearing Presbyterians. Litster, however, does not account for the fact that these personas do not connote real life Nora or Maud in any uncomplicated way. They are not merely roles they play but literary characters created through narrating or, as Culley (1985: 12) puts it, selves that are a fiction and a construction. This explains why one finds a portrait of a hysterical female, a shallow and man-crazy girl and a bookish woman who hides from visitors all under the sign ‘Nora’. Furthermore, these diverse roles are connected by irony and parody to a considerable degree – so much so that parody can be seen as the glue that holds the whole diary together and helps in its interpreting.

Just as in Montgomery’s personal journals, differentiating between the narrating I and the narrated I is pivotal and helps when analysing the diary’s multiple levels of meaning. Indeed, most of the humour in the diary results from the ironic gap between the tone of the narrating I and the description of the narrated I, as in this example: ‘Nora says I am not a decent person. I don’t know whether to be mad or not. I wish I had asked the minister when he was in’ (Montgomery TS: 113; emphasis original). The narrator (Maud) portrays the narrated I as an obedient Presbyterian and a simple country girl while her tone is not serious at all. This is emphasised by an earlier comment: ‘Then we had tea. Somehow or other grace was interrupted. I hope it will not impair digestion’ (Montgomery TS: 113; emphasis original). The narrator parodies a common character type probably familiar in the surrounding community.

In fact, sometimes the gap between the fictional alter egos created and the two more or less real authorial personas is so wide that the contrast affects the text. Nora writes about herself in the third person when the roles become too hard to fuse: ‘Miss Lefurgey, the mistress of Cavendish public school, read a paper on Lord Byron’ (Montgomery TS: 130). During the writing of the diary, Nora was working as a teacher in Cavendish, whereas Maud had worked as a teacher as well and was already a well-established writer. In real life these official roles were of course very tangible to Nora and Maud, but in the secret diary they become as fictional as all the other personas created. This process can be seen in Nora referring to herself as teacher in the third person, as if the teacher-Nora has nothing to do with the diary-writer-Nora.

The difficulty to combine the diverse personas stems from the way both writers

stage the bad girl persona in the diary (see Gammel 2005c: 17). The bad girl character is a familiar one especially for Montgomery who in her first private diary as a nine-year-old mimicked the naughty 'Little Gorgie' in Metta Victor's *A Bad Boy's Dirty* and 'schemed and planned many naughty tricks' (Montgomery 1985: 281) so that she could then write about them (see Litster 2005: 97-8). Just as burlesque and carnival, this is a strategy of trying out a role one is never able to play out in real life. Nora the teacher or Maud the church organist could never have acted so callously in the local community, 'hamming it up centre-stage in the roles of popular flirts' (Litster 2005: 101).

Besides employing various kinds of *persona*, autobiography and diary writing can be seen as a theatre where the writer creates in writing various roles in describing herself. Evelyn J. Hinz (1992) in her article 'Mimesis: The Dramatic Lineage of Auto/biography' specifies auto/biography's close connection to drama. She criticises the supposed analogy between auto/biography and prose fiction and suggests that auto/biography's 'sister-art' in fact is drama (Hinz 1992: 195). Hinz (1992: 199) points to the fact that for example

in the novel we delight in the pretence of imitation and the absence of constraints, whereas in drama and auto/biography freedom is the illusion and the pleasure (and the pain) principle arises from contending with the reality principle.

She goes on to claim that both in drama and auto/biography the reader's enjoyment stems from knowing that the subject can never be ultimately defined and that what we are witnessing is a performance (Hinz 1992: 199). The drama analogy fits the secret diary especially well because it is so full of theatrical acts, word play, roles, characters and comical settings. As Litster (2005: 101) puts it: 'If the diary is thereby part Shakespearian comedy with marriage as the desired outcome, it is also part pantomime, part farce, and part musical play'.

Connected to this theatricality is language, which in the secret diary is highly colloquial and has, according to Litster (2005: 101), firm grounding in oral culture and local sayings. The relaxed language is similar to the style of the early entries in Montgomery's personal journal, only even more overtly informal and conversational, as in this example:

Dash Bob and Henry! I went to town with many misgivings. And sure 'nuff that Bob came up and took Nora driving one night so I guess I'm out of it for good. I don't care I'm sure. James has bought a lovely place down at Bridgetown!
(Montgomery TS: 143)

Maud creates the persona of a jealous schoolgirl, familiar from her own early journal

entries, by giving her the voice of one, with expressions such as ‘Dash Bob and Henry!’. Like an actor getting into her role, she makes sure every detail is correct, starting from the way of speaking and getting the tone right.

An important part of the creation of this role is gossip – again a very theatrical and low-brow device – which combines oral culture and drama:

Annie did not seem inclined to talk about James although Maggie introduced the subject and poor Nora pricked up her ears wistfully, hoping she was going to hear something about that Bridgetown farm. But no, Annie, dear girl, was not in a communicative mood. (Montgomery TS: 143)

As can be noted from this excerpt, gossip also works as a narrative tool that combines entries to each other and moves the story forward. The object of Nora’s and Maud’s mock crush – the ‘Soulful James’ – had purchased a property outside Cavendish, the Bridgetown farm, which is hinted at in both entries mentioned above through the use of gossip.

Gammel (2005b: 9) writes in the introduction to *The Intimate Life of L. M. Montgomery* that ‘Montgomery’s teasing banter [in the secret diary] presents a new voice that is distinctly different from that of the journals’. The voice is indeed completely different from the dramatic and introverted style of the personal journals. But the personas created in the secret diary – the shallow flirt, ‘dutiful, if reluctant, church-worker’ (Litster 2005: 100), the burlesque Maude – can all be found in the journals too. We have already met the flirtatious schoolgirl character in the early entries of Montgomery’s journal (see chapter 2), only the tone and style of writing in them is somewhat different being less self-ironic and usually without a hint of humour. In fact, in the secret diary Montgomery creates a parody of her former diary self with the aid of hyperbolic language, which shows how aware she is of the personas created in the journals. Only this time the portrayal of the light-minded girl has more adult tones to it – but also more humour.

It is noteworthy that the style variations can often be attributed to a change in audience.⁷² A phenomenon called ‘register’ in discourse analysis affects diary writing like everything else. Although Gammel’s point of the shockingly different voice found in the secret diary is understandable, the change in register in the two diaries is also highly logical. In the secret diary Montgomery writes with and for Nora, in the personal journal mostly for herself and for the future audience, hence the alteration of register.

⁷²A good example are Montgomery’s letters to her childhood friend Penzie Macneill. The letters are not edited by Montgomery and present a less controlled and more vernacular style of writing. Most of these letters are published in Bolger (1974).

However, even in the personal journal there are instances where the style resembles that of the secret diary. As mentioned earlier, one example is the early entries of the first volume – the schoolgirl years – but even later, when Montgomery is sharing a room with a fellow student, Mary Campbell, in Prince of Wales College, or visiting her cousins in Park Corner the style of the entries changes completely to a more casual and jocular one, since the audience is familiar and present.⁷³

Even the seemingly improvised secret diary offers a glimpse of the way Montgomery controlled her authorial and autobiographical persona. Litster (2005: 98) notes that ‘the anguished journalist’ of the personal journals was surprised and discomforted by the frivolous Maud of the secret diary. Something of the discomfort of Montgomery the-journal-writer can be heard in this comment from the secret diary:

If Nora were writing this journal alone what a fearful mass of misstatements it would be. Fortunately I am in the biz. too, and so can correct her terrible fibs about my character. (Montgomery TS: 136)

It is interesting to note that a diary writer can supposedly be shocked by her own creation and by the inability to control the shaping of the text. As mentioned in earlier chapters, creating personas in life writing is not always something that is done intentionally but the creation sometimes comes to be by the writing act itself. The shared authority and audience in the secret diary furthermore affects the way the personas are summoned on its pages.

The contrast between the humorous and ironic tone in the diary and the characterisation of the narrated Is as slightly hysterical, overtly romantic and obedient young women creates a double narrative. In this narrative the friction between the two layers – the portrayal of the narrated Is and the tone of the narrating Is – creates not only humour and parody but also social commentary in which the ridiculous aspects underline the powerless position of women in the society. Why else would two adult women,⁷⁴ more or less independent, write in a style and about a theme that would better suit – in Montgomery’s own words – ‘a couple of harum-scarum girls in their frivolous teens’ (Montgomery 1985: 287).

Something of the powerless position of the writers of the diary comes across towards the end of the diary and surfaces much more subtly than the louder voices of burlesque and parody. Most of the diary being about mock romance and making fun of

⁷³See for instance the entries of March 18, 23 and April 15, 1894 (Montgomery UJ: 260-1, 263-4, 272-3) and February 28, 1892 (Montgomery UJ: 153).

⁷⁴In 1903, during the writing of the diary, Maud was 28 and Nora almost 23.

the everlasting pursuit of women to find a husband, the biggest irony in it stems from the reference at the final entries to one ‘real life’ romance. This is due to the appearance of Montgomery’s future husband Ewan Macdonald on the stage.⁷⁵ Rather than being a case of actual infatuation, marrying Ewan was probably more of a practical choice for Montgomery, although Nora teases Maud by writing that ‘(you know she [Maud] has taken up church work since the young ministers have struck the place)’ (Montgomery TS: 147). The tragic irony in the secret diary stems from knowing that no matter how much fun the two diarists make of the rules of society in writing, they are unable to escape them in reality. In the early twentieth century unmarried women were still very much at the mercy of others and Montgomery knew this intimately.⁷⁶

What is interesting in the entries where Ewan is mentioned is that compared to her personal journals, Maud of the secret diary writes much more openly about love. Whether or not Montgomery was in love with Ewan is not really relevant. However, the way Montgomery writes about her future husband in her journals shows that similarly with other instances of romance, here too Montgomery tampers with the image formed. In the personal journals Ewan is not really mentioned until he and Montgomery are engaged. Their courting is depicted in a retrospective entry of October 12, 1906 – three years after the first encounter and written on the day of the engagement – which is later re-written by Montgomery, proven by the fact that the pages have been replaced in the original manuscript. This entry, in addition to the entry that describes Montgomery and Ewan’s wedding day, is so full of gaps and silences that it is like a maze where the reader is lost and left wondering who is controlling the versions of truth in the journals.

Most of the re-written pages describe Ewan in a tone that is surprisingly similar to most previous depictions of romances in the journals – very unemotional and guarded: ‘He [Ewan] was considered a handsome man by many *but I should rather call him fine-looking*’ (Montgomery 1985: 320; my italics which denote the section written on a later-inserted page). Montgomery’s description of Ewan’s courting repeats the pattern of placing the narrated I with the power to decide about the relationship and portraying the men as below her, as in this example: ‘I did not discover any especial congeniality in him [Ewan] and was not in the least attracted to him. He was not an intellectual man and had no culture in spite of his college education’ (Montgomery 1985: 321). In my conversation with Mary Rubio, she expressed that her reading of this

⁷⁵Ewan came to Cavendish to work as a reverend (see Gammel 2005c: 81).

⁷⁶Montgomery was living in a house with her ageing grandmother that would be inherited by her uncle, hence left unmarried she would have had to rely on her relatives.

thorough editing is that after the difficulties in their marriage – Ewan’s mental illness being the most serious – Montgomery went back and rewrote the original entries probably downplaying her excitement with the new and handsome husband candidate (September 8, 2009). This interpretation is supported by what is found in the secret diary about Ewan.

The first mention of Ewan in the secret diary is in the June 21, 1903 entry. Maud writes in unison with the romantic schoolgirl voice:

This morning we had a Highlander to preach for us and he was ‘chust lofely’ and all the girls got struck on him. My heart pittty-patted so that I could hardly play the hymns. It’s weak yet so I shall stop short with this beautiful quotation from Omar Khayam. (Montgomery TS: 145)

The voice is not serious in any way – the quotation that follows is a mock pastiche⁷⁷ – and without historical knowledge of ‘the highlander’ it would not seem different from the rest of the mock romances depicted in the diary. The next mention of him is in the entry of June 25, 1903, where Maud explains the change in weather by the appearance of Ewan: ‘Those Highlanders must have great influence at the throne of grace’ (Montgomery TS: 146). What is most interesting in the three entries where Ewan is mentioned in passing is that they exist. These references are instant reactions rather than highly edited later contemplations. Here Montgomery openly reveals her romantic voice – only slightly hiding it behind the irony of the diary – something that does not take place almost anywhere else in her autobiographical writings. In this respect, the personal journals of Montgomery are more secretive and private than the ‘secret’ but shared diary of Nora and Maud.

Litster (2005: 89) writes about the difficulty of interpreting the secret diary, mentioning that the diary is actually a long-running private joke with few passages that would make sense on their own. The above example of Ewan and other features of the diary prove how hard it is to place diaries and journals in the private/public dichotomy. Bloom (1996: 24) has analysed the features of ‘truly private diaries’ and ‘public private diaries’ and shows how diaries – a genre that by definition assumes privacy – are very rarely truly private in their form and that especially for a professional writer there are no private writings – a case in point being Montgomery’s life writing.⁷⁸

⁷⁷‘Nora stood on the fishy deck/ And hit me on the head,/ The sun that shone on Robbie’s house/ Shone round us o’er the dead (crabs)/ Yet beautiful and bright she stood/ Bound to brew up a storm,/ For Nora will be drowned to death/ Before she will reform’ (Montgomery TS: 145).

⁷⁸See Nussbaum’s (1988: 128-140) article in which she discusses the history of the diary form and notes that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries diaries were still largely private in that they were rarely published. However, in the nineteenth century came a turn toward a more dual position; diaries

Judged by the characteristics of private and public diaries that Bloom (1996: 25-35) scrutinises, the secret diary would at first glance seem more ‘truly private’. Truly private diaries are ‘so terse they seem coded’, need extra-textual information to be explained and provide a clear chronology with no foreshadowing or flashbacks (Bloom 1996: 25-8). The co-authored diary offers no background information on the characters and events in the diary, as Litster (2005: 89) has noted, and any sophisticated analysis of the text must rely on extra-textual information, no matter how familiar the reader is with Montgomery’s life. Furthermore, characterisation in diaries of this kind has no concern with creating an authorial persona and provides no in-depth analysis of subordinate characters (Bloom 1996: 27).

In contrast, Montgomery’s personal journals clearly share much more features with Bloom’s definition of the ‘public private’ diaries. They are free-standing public documents with a wider scope of themes and subjects and have a greater variation in form and technique (Bloom 1996: 28). The public private diaries, such as Montgomery’s, ‘circumvent the diary’s dailiness’ (Bloom 1996: 29) by concentrating on topic rather than chronology and paying attention to scene setting, characterisation, metaphors and symbols and repetition of important themes. As texts they are self-contained and self-explanatory with the author of the diary portrayed as the central character, and usually over go extensive revision whether or not published (Bloom 1996: 30-3).

The tables get turned, however, as far as audience and romance are concerned in the secret diary and Montgomery’s personal journals. The two texts complicate Bloom’s definitions to some extent, since although both can be placed within the matrix, there are features Bloom does not account for. For instance, the definitions of *private* and *public* are not straightforward. Private can be understood meaning either ‘intimate’ and ‘personal’, or ‘secretive’, thus being the opposite of public. The secret diary is both of these, being extremely intimate between the two writers and also secretive in not telling everything. Public on the other hand infers ‘openness’ and usually entails publication, which until 2005 was not the case with the secret diary.

On the other hand, right from its etymology,⁷⁹ *public* by definition carries audience at its core. Hence, the secret diary could be defined as a more public document

could be classified as public or private, since more diaries were published (Nussbaum 1988: 131).
⁷⁹‘Middle English *publique*, from Anglo-French, from Latin *publicus*; akin to Latin *populus* people’ according to Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/public>, April 3, 2010.

with its overt audience – Nora to Maud and vice versa – and a certain kind of frankness that comes with it. Intimate details such as real life romances of Montgomery are more openly discussed in it, because the main audience in the diary is Nora, a close confidante. Similarly, Montgomery's 'public private' journals – which resemble an autobiography more than a diary oftentimes – could be defined as more private because of their secrecy, as is the case with Ewan or the triangle drama discussed in the previous chapter. The seemingly intimate journals actually give away surprisingly little (see Rubio 2008: 276) and only hint at matters of the heart by vague sentences such as 'Jack S. came down with me and said all manner of nice things to me' (Montgomery 1985: 111). Montgomery also often employs set phrases – 'we had so much fun', 'no end of fun' – that get repeated and leave the actual message blank.

Litster (2005: 98) discusses which of the two journals reveals more of Montgomery herself – the collaborative diary or the more personal journal. She concludes that either the secret diary is essentially fiction or it shows an unfamiliar but true side of Montgomery (Litster 2005: 98-9). As can be resolved by the difficulty of defining private and public diaries and the importance of audience in diary writing, Litster's antithesis seems too rigorous. Surely fictionality and several sides of the author can co-exist in autobiographical writing – and by necessity, always do. Litster forgets that even Montgomery's personal journal is full of contrasting and diverse personas that show the author or her textual personas in several different lights, as discussed in previous chapters. Life writing is always a narrative – or a drama – which forces the creation of alternative selves. The fictional aspects are present in life writing as much as in other genres.

4.4 Conclusion

In her examination of the Prince Edward Island newspapers from Montgomery's era, McDonald-Rissanen (2001: 6) concludes that 'how women are depicted and how they depict themselves appear to be two very contradictory stories'. The secret diary of Nora and Maud is a perfect case in point. For example, staging the bad girl is a strategy that both writers employ to vent exasperation by writing, as is evident in the entries that criticise religion or dismantle male authority by parody. Displaying anger in the text shows the ability to write oneself into a position of power (Litster 2005: 102), which is exactly what Nora and Maud accomplish in the diary. They refuse to remain mere

objects of desire and admiration but write themselves into the position of the writing subject. In addition, as Litster (2005: 102) has noted, the power of the writing subject includes sexual authority. In a society where men traditionally held the keys to sexuality, the secret diary is a unique document in showing how the two women claim part of the sexual power for themselves.

The secret diary is pivotal in understanding all aspects of Montgomery's writing, including her fictional works. Since most of Montgomery's novels succumb to the general expectations of romance – namely that in the end, the girl gets the boy and they get married – it is reassuring to see how in other, less public writings, such as the secret diary, she was able to create alternate fictions and undermine the conventional romance plot. Interestingly enough, the thing that most connects the secret diary with Montgomery's fiction is the subverting strategy of humour, irony and parody, even slapstick comedy at times. As Rubio (1994: 20-1) writes in 'Subverting the Trite', humour is Montgomery's main weapon in dismantling the traditional romance plot and was one of her ways of side-stepping the general public's expectations and publishers' wishes.⁸⁰ Reading the secret diary in relation to fiction and vice versa will not only show similarities between the two, but help to illuminate the diversity of Montgomery's writing skills. The writer who is able to perform as a depressed journalist in her personal journals and simultaneously master the character of a flirting humorist in the secret diary manages to escape all clear-cut definitions, shows her compositional power and invites her readers to the disturbing but fun realms of burlesque, theatre and role play.

⁸⁰Rubio (2008: 470) also argues in her biography that Montgomery was 'caught in the difficult position of being damned if she did and damned if she didn't'. According to Rubio (2008: 470), Montgomery had an audience that expected a certain kind of fiction from her and was appalled if she put in any explicit 'modern' material. 'Yet when she wrote the light, humorous fiction expected by her publisher and audience, the critics like A. L. Phelps condemned her as "ignorant of life"', Rubio (2008: 470) maintains.

5. Conclusion

In the introduction to the third published volume of *The Selected Journals* editors Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston (1992: xviii) note how Montgomery's gender training is firmly inscribed in the journals, but that the journals still manage to articulate angrier tones directed against the imposed silence. In Rubio's and Waterston's (1992: xviii) opinion, Montgomery 'writes not as an angel but as an anxious, angry, frustrated woman' – at least by the third volume when she is well over forty. Indeed, as my analysis of her portrayal of romance in the journals suggests, Montgomery's gender training does not always get the better of her and there are several instances where the anxious, angry and frustrated woman of the later re-writing and copying process lets her voice be heard, thus undermining the more angelic tones of the original younger journaliser. In fact, these occasions of friction help in explaining the rather contradicting accounts of romance Montgomery provides in her journal.

The disturbing aspects of Montgomery's depiction of romance stems from its discordant nuances, in other words, from the fact that boy-talk and beaux dominate the narrative – at least in the first published volume – but love is almost a four-letter word for the narrator. As Irene Gammel (2005a: 139) has pointed out, Montgomery – or the journal's narrating I – is in the habit of denigrating the few men she is attracted to, again corroborating the ambiguous tactics of the journal. The first volume of *The Selected Journals* offers an endless succession of proposals, courtiers, beaux, moonlight walks and rides, but also an equally endless series of the narrating I portraying the narrated I retracing her steps when things get too serious and drawing a veil over her feelings.

One reading of these inconsistencies – which Gammel (2005b: 11) decodes as meaning that Montgomery was sexually repressed – is that the author of the journal is not willing to provide the expected closure to the romance narrative by its culmination in marriage or sex. Although Montgomery did eventually marry Ewan Macdonald and even included a highly sexually charged portion in her journal (in relation to the Herman Leard affair), on the textual level the reader is not offered the traditional relief of feelings, or catharsis. The depiction of Montgomery's wedding, honeymoon and married life is vague to say the least and far from romantic. In addition, in the more passionate and explicitly narrated two suitors entries, sexual contact is suppressed and denied. However, this does not entail that Montgomery was sexually repressed, but only illustrates the way the journal operates as a narrative and textual entity.

A citation from the second published volume of the journals further proves that

rather than drawing conclusions of Montgomery's sexuality through her autobiographical writing one should take into account the extent to which she writes within the customs and discourses of her time, indeed almost imprisoned by them as well as by her own writing conventions.⁸¹ In an entry of January 31, 1920, the narrator states: 'I have not yet found anything much pleasanter than talking with the right kind of a man – except – but I won't write it. My descendants might be shocked' (Montgomery 1987: 369). With this relatively obvious reference to sex, perhaps due to the mentally and morally more relaxed nineteen-twenties, Gammel's reading of Montgomery as sexually repressed seems dubious. The above statement suggests that any writer of autobiographical texts may contradict and disagree with herself as well as create several images of the autobiographical subject. Just as the narrator of the 1920s entry may slightly flirt with the idea of writing about sexuality, the narrator of the 1890s or 1900s entry may not.

Interpreting the first volume of Montgomery's published journal, as well as the first two unpublished manuscripts, one can discern a process by which Montgomery covertly writes out an alternative narrative for the hetero-normative romance plot. In this counter-narrative the numerous fictionally created personas accomplish to advocate an unromantic woman, independent and self-sufficient without the need of a right suitor to equal her maturity. Read in this light, Montgomery's romantic discourse has a modern undertone to it, one that renders her ultimately quite daring. As my examination of her life writing proves, Montgomery chooses more or less consciously to thwart the convention of the domestic romance plot. Although it is evident that she simultaneously to some extent writes within the tradition, the amount of humour, parody, satire and detachment of the narrator, however, should not pass unnoticed. As readers, we might be disappointed by the lack of closure and culmination to Montgomery's romances, but this is yet another indication of how deeply imprinted the expectations of the convention are.

Intriguingly, but not surprisingly, the journal portrays much more intimate bonds and free-flowing romantic language in relation to female friends, which I have not been able to touch upon within the scope of this thesis. Having only considered the concept of hetero-sexual romance and Montgomery's relationships with men, further study is called for on her close interactions with female friends. Mary Beth Cavert (2005: 106-

⁸¹Betty Jane Wylie (1995: 195) discusses how many female diarists employ ritual, litany, clichés and stock phrases, which in her opinion have nothing to do with how they really feel.

125), among others, has discussed the importance of Nora Lefurgey's friendship to Montgomery and Montgomery's slightly queer contact with a woman called Isabel Anderson. Judging from Cavert's analysis, as well as accounts of Montgomery's female friends in the journals, it is clear that for Montgomery it was easier to create a persona of a romantic lover in relation to women than to men.

When putting Montgomery's life writing in context, her attitude to love is easier to understand. Writing about female intimacy in a style that was usually restricted to describing hetero-sexual romance may have been a liberating strategy for Montgomery.⁸² Carroll Smith-Rosenberg (1975: 28) notes in her article on women's relationships in the nineteenth century United States that these female relationships offered important emotional functions for women at the time when the division of two separate gender spheres was still prevailing. Creating close bonds with women did not threaten the status quo. For example, there was no danger of becoming pregnant – a dangerous fate for an unmarried woman in Montgomery's time, as discussed in chapter 3.⁸³

As demonstrated in this thesis, the expected audience, the importance of fictional models and the process of fictionalisation play important roles in analysing the personas in Montgomery's life writing. Romance might be the most strictly controlled aspect in Montgomery's journals, mainly because she was aware of her future audience, and an aspect that offers an extensively covered tradition of fictional models for the skilful journaliser. However, there are instances in the text which let go of the automatic and conventional style of writing and fixed phrases, undoing the process which Betty Jane Wylie (1995: 195) calls 'automatic smoothing over'. For instance, the narrator's voice as a rebellious author persona is a far cry from the obedient and apologetic female writer met elsewhere in the journals. Especially in entries that depict the narrated I as utterly depressed, the frustrated and angry tones mentioned by Rubio and Waterston become evident, as when the narrator states in the December 22, 1900 entry: 'I keep my rebellion to myself and nobody suspects it. But it is there for all, seething and fermenting' (Montgomery 1985: 255). In the entry of Christmas Eve, 1909 the narrating I even attacks the main authority of the time, God, by crying out: 'I feel utterly *rebellious*. I feel tonight as if God were indeed the cruel tyrant of Calvin's theology,

⁸²See for instance Montgomery's novel *Anne's House of Dreams* (1917) where Anne's relationship with Leslie Moore is more extensively covered than the one with Gilbert, Anne's husband.

⁸³Depicting her involvement with a second cousin, Oliver Macneill, to whom she was physically attracted, Montgomery (1985: 359) states: 'I have a horror of feeling thus towards any man I cannot marry. It seems to me a shameful, degrading, dangerous thing – and it is'.

who tortures his creatures for no fault of their own at His whim and pleasure' (Montgomery 1985: 363).

Balancing on the verge of an old and new era – the Victorian nineteenth century turning into the modern twentieth century – Montgomery's diverse voices echo either indignant and exasperated as in the personal journal or comical and light-hearted as in the secret diary, or both, blending into the fascinating personas the diarist creates in writing. The same diversity must be extended to the analysis of Montgomery's romance discourse. Controlling the romantic image that emerges from her journals, Montgomery seems to signal most pointedly that when it comes to love, the threads of the story are firmly in the hands of the author. However, reading against the grain is and should be the reader's prerogative, one that will lead to as yet unexplored textual paths.

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