

# *Of Plots, Secrets, Burrowers and Moles: Archives in Espionage Fiction*

by PETER GILLIS

In *The Chancellor Manuscript* Robert Ludlum, one of the pre-eminent espionage writers of the last decade, uses the guise of an archives photographer as the cover for an agent of a secret society, Inver Brass, which is filming the funeral of J. Edgar Hoover. He says of the man, "... the official-looking identification pinned to his breast-pocket was stamped with the seal of the Department of Archives. No one questioned it; no one knew what it meant."<sup>1</sup> Ludlum and his fellow authors have assumed a sense of mystery and a general ignorance on the part of the public toward archives, and yet they have not been loathe to incorporate archival themes in their writing.

These themes derive from two particular ideas which have pervaded fictional espionage writing since the 1930s. The first concerns the concept of information as power. This idea has intrigued novelists who have spun many a plot around an agent or protagonist who must search out secret or hidden facts in order to achieve the power and knowledge to crush a plot or cabal. It is a theme which is sometimes developed on its own, but often is entwined with a second idea—the captivating proposition that the past haunts the present. Ugly facts, long hidden and forgotten, are uncovered to expose an existing web of espionage and crime. Together these two themes have produced within spy fiction a unique commentary on the nature of archives and the uses to which they can be put. Indeed, writers of this type of novel have produced a view of archives which is at once traditional in its definition and yet dynamic (it is somewhat flattering to think that some consider archivists so essential to the spy game) in the uses made of documentation. It is of some interest to look at these popular attitudes toward archives in order to see if the fantasy and imagination of the fiction writer can help archivists to more clearly delineate some of the boundaries of their craft.

The modern spy novel is usually dated from the appearance in the last half of the 1930s of Eric Ambler's novels on the world of espionage and international crime, of which *The Mask of Dimitrios* (1939) is the masterpiece. The genre itself can be traced to Yuan dynasty China and in English literature follows a line through James Fennimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826); Edgar Allan Poe, *The Purloined Letter* (1845); Erskine Childers, *The Riddle of the*

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1 Robert Ludlum, *The Chancellor Manuscript* (New York, 1978), p. 57.

*Sands* (1903); Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Agent* (1907); and *Under Western Eyes* (1911); Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Bruce Partington Plans* (1908); and John Buchan, *The Thirty-nine Steps*, (1915) and the rest of his Richard Hannay books, among others.<sup>2</sup> All of these are fine books, weaving exciting and gripping tales, and were a considerable cut above the racist, right-wing imperialist hero, “Bulldog” Drummond, who was so popular during the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>3</sup> What these novels lacked, however, was a sense of realism. It was this factor which Ambler brought to spy fiction in what Donald McCormick has called the “factual, authentic spy story.”<sup>4</sup> After Ambler, though fantasy could still run wild in aid of a good plot, authors have tended to research much more closely the geographical areas, the espionage techniques and technology, and the secret service organizations about which they are writing.<sup>5</sup>

Archives have assumed a major presence in spy fiction of the post-Ambler period. The genre itself began to eschew melodrama, the superhero and the extravagant (the major exception being the extraordinary success of Ian Fleming’s James Bond) for what reviewers and commentators have classed as “sober realism.”<sup>6</sup> This is perhaps to over-state the case, for few can give full credence to the incredible adventures spun by Frederick Forsyth or Robert Ludlum.<sup>7</sup> Yet realism is the key and the research of factual background is exhaustive. One of the major results of this change in approach to the spy novel has been a host of books based on the two particular themes outlined above—information as power and the haunting of the present by the past. This in turn has served to introduce archives and matters archival into the very heart of some of the best popular fiction of the last forty years.

Haunting of the present has been the most pervasive theme. The general scenario involves an innocent victim who, as Donald McCormick so aptly puts it, is “exploited by terrible haunting events of a world catastrophe (or figure) past but still present.”<sup>8</sup> It is this type of plot which forms Eric Ambler’s classic, *The Mask of Dimitrios*. Charles Latimer, an ex-lecturer in political economy turned crime novelist, decides on a whim to attempt to unravel the story of a real-life international thief, drug dealer and murder whose supposed corpse is dragged from the water of the Turkish coast. The book is set in Europe of the 1920s and 30s and is very much involved with the process of reconstructing the criminal Dimitrios’ identity and career during the turmoil of the post-war Balkans. Through a friend in the Turkish Secret Service, Latimer is allowed to look at his subject’s file in the archives of that organization. From there he begins a trek which takes him to the police archives in Bulgaria, the refugee registry in Athens and other police archives in Rome. During his search, one civil servant informs him that “Organization . . . is the secret of modern statecraft” and certainly it is

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2 For the history of the spy novel see Donald McCormick, *Who’s Who In Spy Fiction* (London, 1979).

3 McCormick, p. 15.

4 McCormick, p. 16.

5 *Ibid.*

6 *Ibid.*

7 For example see F. Forsyth, *The Odessa File* (London, 1972) or R. Ludlum *The Holcroft Covenant* (New York, 1979).

8 McCormick, p. 18

through the massive information stored in an orderly fashion in the official archives of a variety of government agencies that Latimer is able to determine that Dimitrios is still very much alive and active, his criminal and murderous activities now veiled behind a respectable banking institution based in France.<sup>9</sup>

Latimer is lucky. Unlike the journalist Peter Miller in Forsyth's *The Odessa File* and Charles Stone in *The Birds of Prey* an excellent novel by Canadian John Ralston Saul, who also pursue figures and events from the past only to find them very much affecting the present, he escapes with his life while Dimitrios is killed in a shoot out.<sup>10</sup> Yet Ambler, in spinning his plot around a search through past records, establishes important patterns for the archives theme which are paralleled in a great many other spy novels.

The first of these patterns involves the fact that various series of documentation can be used to reconstruct the personal identity and career of an individual. This is a respectable endeavour for a scholar of history but becomes more suspect and devious when it is used by an agent or, in Ambler's case, a popular writer to probe personal relationships, usually in the recent past and within living memory. Here, the perplexing issue which is now beginning to bedevil the archivist, of the research value of information versus respect for personal privacy is challenged directly by the spy novelist. They assume that vast quantities of personal information are retained on a wide variety of people in both official and private archives and that it is natural that it will be used to trace the careers and activities of individuals. No better example of the indiscriminate use of archival documentation by the espionage world is available than in John Le Carré's *The Honourable School Boy*. In this novel di Salis, the Circus' (British Intelligence) chief China watcher (a burrower) scours the records of Shanghai University, "oriental archives", other archives in Rome, Tokyo and Munich and finally the records of old Baptist mission schools in order to piece together the life of suspected enemy agent. Always, di Salis "covered his inquiries in a welter of questions so that he even got the Cousins (the C.I.A.) to unwittingly open their files to him."<sup>11</sup> Indeed when information about the past is needed, spy fiction writers almost invariably have their agents or protagonists turn to some sort of archival institution. Thomas Daniels, a lawyer and the leading character in Noel Hynd's *The Sandler Inquiry* sums up accurately the espionage writer's view of archives:

The microfilm was both the easiest and the most logical place to begin. Left by Andrea in the archive room of the rambling old building on 43rd Street Thomas wandered for several minutes among the rows after rows of catalogued and categorized files. Occasionally, at random, he would open a drawer and superficially eye the contents. Obituaries of the remote and long-forgotten. Clippings and news stories of events, important and otherwise, which no living person could remember.<sup>12</sup>

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9 See Eric Ambler, *The Mask of Dimitrios* (Glasgow, 1978).

10 Forsythe, *Odessa* and John Ralston Saul, *The Birds of Prey* (Toronto, 1979).

11 John Le Carré, *The Honourable School Boy* (London, 1977), p. 264.

12 Noel Hynd, *The Sandler Inquiry* (New York, 1977), p. 160.

Thus, for the spy novelist, archives cannot be separated between events and personal information. The two are inextricably intertwined and indeed must be if those involved in espionage or criminal acts are to be exposed by the dark facts ferretted out by the agent or protagonist. This integral relationship is clearly established by John Le Carré in *A Small Town in Germany*.<sup>13</sup> An unsatisfactory, unpromotable Second Secretary on the British Embassy staff in Bonn disappears and is thought to have defected with a “classified green file” and a trolley, a typewriter and a tea-making machine. What in fact has happened is that this most undistinguished gentleman has recognized the rising new leader of the Federal Republic of Germany as a Nazi war criminal and has slowly worked through the Chancery archives gathering the essential data to prove his guilt. The forgotten vault which contained this documentation was known as “the Glory Hole” with

the great archive which lined the wall from floor to ceiling; [with] the slim black files each with a rusted loop and a rounded thumb-hole, some grey with bloom, some wrinkled and bent with damp, column after column in their black uniforms, veterans trained and waiting to be called.<sup>14</sup>

But what Harting, the Second Secretary, was looking for were “the Personalities Survey . . . the old case histories in the Glory Hole. He would put the case together again, reopen the investigation.”<sup>15</sup> The German secret police makes sure he dies for his efforts, but plainly Le Carré reinforces the view of archives as the vital combination of information on personalities and events.

If, however, the writers of spy fiction love to have their characters rummaging around amongst archival materials in order to locate the truth concerning opposing agents or organizations, they are not as sure that the facts which are discovered should be removed from their secret status. Since those facts gleaned from the past haunt the present and often verify the existence of disturbing factors long hidden from the world it is perhaps not surprising that plots in spy fiction often call for the suppression of archival documentary evidence. Therefore secrecy emerges as the second pattern within this archival theme. It is a concept of an archives very different from the general one of centres comprised largely of open records and other documentary materials awaiting use and publication by the scholarly community or the public at large. Such institutions are not foreign to spy novelists. Indeed, Peter Miller in *The Odessa File* and Charles Stone in *The Birds of Prey* go to public record offices, newspaper morgues and library collections to search out information from sources which are fully open and accessible to them. But both men die in an effort to make public the deeply secret, often forgotten, facts which they dredge up. They unleash the fury of powerful forces existing in the modern world but shaped by the past. In their passion to publicize their findings they are quite different from the usual agent or protagonist. Much more consistently such characters slowly come to realize the destructive nature of the historical documentation which they are about to reveal and actually aid in its suppression after being assured that the evil plot has been suitably crushed by their own, or at least friendly, forces.

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13 Le Carré, *A Small Town In Germany* (London, 1978).

14 *A Small Town*, p. 256.

15 *A Small Town*, p. 275.

Robert Ludlum's *The Gemini Contenders* perhaps carries this idea to its most interesting conclusion.<sup>15</sup> A family, the Fontines, carry the haunting memory of death and a terrible secret. Ancient manuscripts, over 1400 years old, the most crucial of which is a confession by the Apostle Peter that Christ was never crucified, were hidden for safe-keeping by a Italian grandfather at the beginning of World War II. Now Adrian Fontine, an innocent victim, must bear the brunt of locating these documents for which men, including his own brother, are willing to commit murder. This "parchment" Ludlum claims "can alter history" and when Fontine himself has reclaimed the documents he is blackmailed by his own United States Intelligence Service so that he will not produce Peter's confession for public scrutiny.<sup>16</sup> It has "dragged up" from its own archives "old truths—documented truths" with which to control Fontine.<sup>17</sup> The novel ends with Fontine consulting two men—one a priest, historian and archivist and the other a scholar of ancient history. The document is studied carefully to prove its authenticity. It is declared to be genuine, but it is pointed out that the confession was wrung from the disciple under torture. Further, the scholar declares that there is no indication that Peter died in that way but also concedes that there is also no sure documentation to refute the facts presented in the confession. In the end it is decided that "the price of truth is too steep" and the manuscript is consigned to the oblivion of another vault.<sup>18</sup> The facts revealed by the document are suppressed; mankind is considered either too reckless or too fragile to cope with this tremendous wrenching of history out of its traditional mold.

This attitude is strange stuff for the normal run of professional archivists, at least in this country, who are dedicated to revealing the true record and promoting scholarship. Yet it makes sense if archives are considered largely secret by nature, containing privileged information which must be used with care. Suspicion and the careful fitting together of minute facts to form a logical story are the grist of the spy novelist and the idea that information is open and available is not particularly appealing to them. As Philippe Van Rjndt, another Canadian writer, says of the Vatican Archives in his introduction to *The Tetramachus Collection*:

The Secret Vatican Archives are real. The term "Secret Archives" is used by the Church as a general reference to all manuscripts records and papers resting in the Court of the Belvedere. My story deals with one very small fraction of this collection—documents that are less than fifty years old and that relate to living people, to existing political, social and economic circumstances . . . They were never meant to see the light of day.<sup>19</sup>

Given this penchant for secrecy the writers of spy fiction prefer to find that figure or event from the past which haunts the present in the "classified file from the archives . . . delivered . . . with the seals unbroken."<sup>20</sup>

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15 Ludlum, *The Gemini Contenders* (New York, 1979).

16 *Gemini Contenders*. p. 351

17 *Ibid.*

18 *Gemini Contenders* p. 407

19 Philippe Van Rjndt, *The Tetramachus Collection* (New York, 1978), author's Note C.F. Martino Giusti, "The Vatican Secret Archives", *Archivaria* 7 (Winter 1978): 16-27.

20 Ludlum, *The Scarlatti Inheritance* (New York, 1979).

Information as power, the other prominent theme, has been called by some commentators a virulent disease in modern society, the very basis of the bureaucratized state, and the source of its own particular type of industry. The theme has proved particularly alluring in spy fiction because an agent is usually involved in building a case and to do this he must master a large variety of information in order to understand his enemy. If the agent is successful, he will come slowly to dominate the situation and foil the plot or expose the enemy agent. John Le Carré's George Smiley is the epitome of the case agent. In *Smiley's People* he goes to the Circus' Registry to delve into its archives in order "to point out the weaknesses in Moscow Centre's armour."<sup>21</sup> Drawn to the "old buff files bound together with green string" and entitled "Memorabilia" he studies his archenemy Karla; yet

When he had done with Karla, he drew the files on Kirov, on Mikhel, on Villem and on the Group at large, if only to give, in retrospect, a solid documentary heart to all he had heard and remembered of the Leipzig—Kirov story. For there was yet another part of Smiley, call it pendant, call it scholar, for which the file was the only truth and all the rest a mere extravagance until it was matched and fitted to the record.<sup>22</sup>

It is the preservation of the "record" that archives, as information, become quintessential to the spy novelists' work. Three excellent examples of the use of this idea are Van Rjndt's *The Tetramachus Collection*; George Simpson's and Neal Burger's *Thin Air* and Le Carré's *Tilogy Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*; *The Honourable School Boy* and *Smiley's People*.<sup>23</sup>

In *The Tetramachus Collection*, the record itself is incriminating. Secret documents are stolen from the Court of Belvedere, the highly classified Vatican Archives. These prove that a Polish cardinal, who wishes to become Pope, collaborated, in the full knowledge of the Church, with the Nazis during World War II.<sup>24</sup> The story develops around the attempts to reclaim the Tetramachus Collection and the power politics which swirl in its wake. The implicated cardinal is eventually forced out of the running for the Chair of St. Peter (incidentally the Keeper of the Vatican Archives loses his job both for being so careless in the first place and then ineffectively covering up the loss). In this case, the information in the record, created as part of the Vatican's activities in Eastern Europe, is so damaging that it could do the Catholic Church incalculable harm and the institution itself has suppressed it. Yet the Church would not destroy the documents; they were like a secret memory which if it would not be divulged could also not be forgotten. To the institution of the Church there was both power in the knowledge to control the over-ambitious and embarrassment if the facts were released. In the end, the Church moves quickly to reclaim and suppress its archive and at the same time to purge itself of corruption in its midst.

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21 Le Carré, *Smiley's People* (New York, 1980), p. 280.

22 *Smiley's People* p. 281.

23 See Van Rjndt, *Tetramachus*; George E. Simpson and Neal R. Burger, *Thin Air* (New York, 1978); and Le Carré, *Honourable School Boy*; *Smiley's People* and *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (London, 1975).

24 Van Rjndt, *Tetramachus*.

*Thin Air* carries this institutional theme of archives to new heights. It is not a particularly powerful book, but merits mention here because in its appreciation of the age of technology it introduces the idea of archives as part of an institutional information system. The story centres on a Navy commander, Nicholas Hammond, who is asked by an old girlfriend to help her husband. The man had been part of a highly secret military experiment designed to make ships invisible. The project had started during World War II and continued into the early 1950s. Hammond's routine checks take him through the American military personnel records centre and into the heart of the Navy's own institutional archives. The emphasis is on the automated nature of these records and the plot develops around the fact that his system has been penetrated by a group of men dedicated to covering up the failure of the initial invisibility tests and who are proceeding with the project secretly.<sup>25</sup> The automated archival control system is programmed not only to obscure facts which these men wish hidden, but has a key built into it which informs them when someone is attempting to investigate these files. Unlike the Vatican, the American Navy has forgotten vital facts about a project; it relies on its archival systems to recall information, but these are manipulated by a powerful outside force. Only when it can be definitively proven that there is a void in the record does the institution move to find out the cause of the gap. Appropriately, one of the Navy men who helps arrest the plotters is the archivist who finally determines that archival material has been obscured in and expunged from the official record.

It is not, however, until we come to John Le Carré's trilogy that the idea of information as power is most fully developed. In this series of books, archives play a central role as institutional memory. Other authors introduce this theme on a more personal level. Witness Noel Hynd's statement in *The Sandler Inquiries* when his protagonist, Thomas Daniels, loses his files in a fire and he declares

Its my out. These files, these records which my father and Adolph Zenger spent a lifetime building. They're nothing now. Nothing. Wiped out. An elusive smile crossed his face. Its like a clean slate.<sup>26</sup>

Note too Elizabeth Scarlatti who, in Ludlum's *The Scarlatti Inheritance*, sits eyeing the ledgers and financial records which formed her "Domesday Book."<sup>27</sup> It is, however, Le Carré who probes deepest into this archival theme, using it even as part of his idiom and seemingly fascinated by the almost drab image it conjures up. This latter point is best illustrated in a snippet from another brilliant Le Carré book, *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold*, where an agent is being drilled. The story requires agents to be both commonplace and unexceptional and the man reflects, "In Helsinki the agent's cover was Adolf Fechtmann from St. Gallen, Switzerland. He had a title—yes that's right: Doctor Fechtmann, archivist."<sup>28</sup> Drabness in its institutional and bureaucratic setting suits Le Carré because it allows him to meld that theme with the concept of information as power.

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25 See Simpson and Burger *Thin Air*.

26 Hynd, *Sandler Inquiry*, p. 39.

27 Ludlum, *Scarlatti Inheritance*, p. 305.

28 Le Carré, *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold* (London, 1964), p. 49.

Institutional memory whether documentary or oral (Le Carré is not above using the term “unwritten archives”<sup>29</sup>) is the medium by which experience and innate brilliance can overcome the general mediocrity of government organization and allow British Intelligence some successes.

Le Carré’s setting is the Circus, premier arm of British Intelligence, and his hero is the plodding, fat, frustrated yet highly intelligent George Smiley, the man quoted as being dedicated to the “record”.<sup>30</sup> His perception of archives is that of a secret and privileged body of information but they do form for him the crux of his operations. By steeping himself in the old files of the Circus, its collective memory meticulously gathered from a thousand different sources, Smiley formulates the plans by which he combats the machinations of his arch-rival Karla and the agents of Moscow Centre.

In fact, it is this very archival collective memory which Karla attempts to destroy in *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*. He has run a “mole,” an enemy agent recruited many years before, right into the heart of the Circus.<sup>31</sup> The “mole” is none other than Bill Haydon, Smiley’s chief competitor for bureaucratic position and his wife’s lover, who is currently chief of the Circus. The damage Haydon wreaks on the institution’s archival memory is revealed in the second book of the trilogy, *The Honourable School Boy*, when Smiley and several associates are trying to locate documentation on a Soviet espionage operation. They “cloistered themselves in the Registry for a long, cautious paperchase” through the “remains of what was . . . London Station’s (Haydon’s office) archive.”<sup>32</sup> The “mole” had systematically destroyed or altered information and only by piecing together “periphery files” not yet touched by Haydon could Smiley find out part of the tale he was chasing.<sup>33</sup> As well Haydon used the “personal files” to blow the covers of numerous agents and George must assure an operative in *The Honourable School Boy*:

Yes, yes quite. However, on balance it seems he [Haydon] never got around to blowing the Occasionals. We’ve traced him to pretty well every other corner of the archive, but the Occasionals were filed under ‘friendly’ contacts in the Territorials . . . in a separate archive altogether one to which he had no natural access.<sup>34</sup>

Smiley himself in *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* must immerse himself in the old records of the Circus in order to determine just who the “mole” is. He is forced to re-live every major action of the organization through its archives to find at just what level the inconsistencies begin to appear. In the later books, it is to the “burrowers”, the men and women who continually collect, sift and file information, to whom Smiley turns when he wants to set up a case. In *The Honourable School Boy*, the “pasty burrowers carved the archive in two” as they searched out the facts on Karla’s various activities, including his “sound archives” because “he ran moles and sound-thieves in tandem.”<sup>35</sup> The pride of the

29 Le Carré, *Smiley’s People*, p. 261.

30 See note 22.

31 See Le Carré, *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*.

32 Le Carré, *Honourable School Boy*, p. 87.

33 *Ibid.*

34 *Honourable School Boy*, p. 114.

35 *Honourable School Boy*, p. 67.



“obsessive burrower’s trade” is Connie Sachs, the Kremlin watcher, who in this second book “unpacked her offerings” in a kind of magic show but not, Le Carré says, “eye of newt, nor the finger of a birth-strangled babe” but “files, a string of them, flagged and annotated, the body of yet another of her impassioned skirmishes through the Moscow Centre archives.”<sup>36</sup>

Connie, however, introduces a new twist for Le Carré. She is the prime burrower and as such she is also for Smiley his major source of recollection. She is in essence his oral archives that he must consult in order to make sense of the bare facts and add life to the institutional memory. Connie is at her height in this realm in *Smiley’s People*, in what may well be her swan-song:

She was seduced.

The glow of the oil lamp had grown into a smoky light-ball, and Connie in her rocking-chair sat at the edge of it, Mother Russia herself, as they had called her in the Circus, her wasting face hallowed with reminiscence as she unfolded the story of just one of her unnumbered family of erring children. Whatever suspicions she was harbouring about Smiley’s motive in coming here, she had suspended them: this was what she had lived for; this was her song, even if it was her last; these monumental acts of recollection were her genius.<sup>37</sup>

In this way, John Le Carré paints his picture of the world of modern espionage with an archival theme very close to its centre. The Circus may be many things for Smiley, but its care and its usefulness is its collective institutional memory (which, in other words, is its archives). It is this which he is able ultimately to protect from the devastation planned by Haydon and it is the information so meticulously classified and filed there which gives him the power he needs to battle Karla. Le Carré puts it most sensitively in *Smiley’s People* when George is delving into the “Memorabilia” files in preparation for his last operation against Karla.

He read as far into his own past as into Karla’s, and sometimes it seemed to him that the one life was merely the complement to the other; that they were causes of the same incurable malady.<sup>38</sup>

Thus for Smiley, the institution’s memories, both documentary and personal, merge into a whole. He, an older man, has given his life to the Circus and is, in fact, simply an extension of this memory.

It should not be surprising that archives as institutional memory should be featured so prominently in the spy game. Most crime prevention and security organizations are indeed archives writ large. They collect, classify and retrieve in an organized manner information in all media and in doing so perform the primary functions for which they were created. Therefore it is not surprising either that John Le Carré, the best and most prescient of the spy novelists, should perceive its centrality to the operation of an intelligence and counter-espionage system. Beyond this Le Carré and other writers view archives as being integral in quality and recording faithfully the interrelationship between personalities

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36 *Honourable School Boy*, p. 70.

37 Le Carré, *Smiley’s People*, p. 185.

38 *Smiley’s People*, p. 281.

and events; the bug-bear of personal privacy is rarely raised as an issue by fictional espionage agents. All of this presents a rather traditional and conservative concept of archives which even though it has some grounding in sound archival theories, may prove offensive to professional archivists. The willingness of characters in spy fiction to suppress documentation when it has been decided, usually arbitrarily, that the truth is too damaging for the world to face is anathema to the doctrine of maintaining and eventually revealing the record intact. On the other hand, the definition of archives as memory and recollection fits easily into the idiom of the archivist and finds a welcome home there. It is perhaps in the customary view of archives privileged and secret that the espionage novel gives the most trouble to the professional archivist.

It has been a long-standing dictum in Canada that archives largely consist of open and accessible materials. This premise derives in part from the professional archivist obtaining the greater part of his training within the historical, academic community and thus inheriting a complete dedication to aiding scholarly research and promoting a high level of public service. These are laudable aims but they have, I believe, somewhat blinded archivists in this country in their dealings with areas of acquisition which demand a more restrictive access policy for their materials. It is in this precise area where the spy novel provides some enlightening perspectives on the development of archives. In this type of literature, the agent constantly deals with highly secret material; material which in the Canadian context would fall under the exemptions outlined in Part IV of the Canadian Human Rights Act and in the proposed federal Freedom of Information Bill. In these areas, the writers of spy fiction have done their homework carefully. Through their research, they have determined that there are intelligence and crime prevention agencies and a host of other public bodies and private corporations which in the performance of their various duties collect, organize and classify a huge amount of information dealing with matters of state, industrial processes, individuals and many other subjects. These banks of documentation have an archival element within them which is useful to the officials employed in these agencies and corporations and which, in part at least, is considered secret and privileged by them.

Professional archivists have found it difficult to cope with such bodies because they rarely classify anything as completely dead and, therefore, open to the public (if they do, it is at such long time intervals as to make the archivist seem somewhat irrelevant to the process). To function within such bodies, the archivist must serve the prime interests of the agency or corporation and, in doing so, is sometimes looked down upon as having "sold out" and as a subverter of the greater aims of scholarship. Yet, it is essential that archivists come to grips with this vexing problem of restricted and privileged access if they hope to have a role in the preservation of highly classified documentation. They must begin to play a dynamic role in the establishment of conditions and control of access which balance research use with the administrative need for secrecy. Archivists must fight against the suppression of documents but also at the same time become more attuned to the needs of the agencies and corporations which they will have to serve. The issue must be faced squarely if public archives can ever act as more than record offices for very old and very dead material. Should more recent information be stored in specialized archives within the creating agencies? The spy

novelist shows us that in many powerful public and private agencies these archives already exist, whether the professional archivist is willing to accept it or not. This world, which is not that far removed from reality, is one where information is power and secret archives are paramount. In this setting, the records keeper is the institution's man. The challenge to the professional archivist is to reach into this system and temper the desire for secrecy and suppression with the needs of research and scholarship. The result would be a considerable strengthening of archivists' role in modern society.

## **Résumé**

L'on fait de plus en plus référence dans certains romans d'espionnage aux archives et aux archivistes. Cela n'est pas du tout étonnant si l'on songe au rôle que joue l'archiviste dans les domaines public et privé, en tant que "gardien" des dossiers. L'information, c'est le pouvoir. L'archiviste doit accepter qu'il lui faille garder sous son entier contrôle les dossiers fermés et pour consultation restreinte. L'auteur analyse donc ce fait de l'émergence de l'archiviste dans le roman d'espionnage et émet l'opinion qu'on met ainsi le doigt sur une lacune de la profession.