

En somme, si l'ensemble des textes de ce recueil ne représentent pas une importante contribution à l'avancement de l'archivistique, ils constituent d'honnêtes "réflexions," en tant qu'observations ou remarques sur certaines préoccupations actuelles de cette discipline.

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**Dangerous Dossiers: Exposing the Secret War Against America's Greatest Authors.** HERBERT MITGANG. New York: Donald I. Fine, Inc., 1988. 331 p. ISBN 1-55611-077-4 \$31.50 cl.

Can government files ever be dangerous enough to frighten and disgust a government records archivist like this reviewer? In this case, yes. Herbert Mitgang, cultural correspondent for the *New York Times* and former president of the American Authors Guild, has written a fascinating account of the American government's policy since 1920 of creating surveillance files on its principal writers, so as to watch this most dangerous element of the population. Using the government's own files, obtained principally from the FBI by means of the U.S. Freedom of Information Act, Mitgang uses about forty of them as the subject of his analysis.

All those famous American authors you did not read in university are here: Sinclair Lewis, Ernest Hemingway, Pearl S. Buck, and John Steinbeck, as well as the key "moderns," Tennessee Williams, Robert Frost, Allan Ginsberg, and Norman Mailer. Archivists can now read their works knowing that the FBI did its best to keep us away from bad influences.

Mitgang does not joke about the period he examines, although he does appreciate the ridiculous nature of some of the investigations. My favourite bit of foolishness concerns an FBI informant in the 1940s who claimed that John Kenneth Galbraith was "doctrinaire" about certain matters. This word became garbled in the FBI file as "Dr. Ware," and the Bureau then spent considerable time over the years trying to find this mysterious associate of Galbraith's and identify his politics. My second favourite concerns the Librarian of Congress and poet Archibald MacLeish, who asked J. Edgar Hoover during the Second World War why the FBI maintained a file on him, and was told that he had been "prematurely anti-Fascist" by publicly speaking out against Franco in 1936.

Mitgang argues that Americans should be angry, rather than amused, by what an agency of the state has done to writers: "Independent opinions, unpopular ideas, political dissent and the freedom to be let alone are embedded as rights in the American Constitution in our tradition of due process by law. Secretly policing authors and their writings are the dreaded hallmarks of an alien police state." He also points out that "not one of the accused authors, dramatists and artists upon whom so much policing manpower and funds were expended — sometimes they were watched for half their lives and records were maintained even after their deaths — [was] ever tried and jailed for the crimes they were suspected of in these files."

Anyone interested in the actions against individuals which are within the capability of the modern democratic state, and in the effect of current legislation on freedom of information and on the privacy of the individual, will find this book useful reading. Mitgang approves highly of freedom-of-information legislation — indeed, he would have had no book without it — but is worried that the Reagan administration has weakened the regulations surrounding these laws, and can give no assurance that U.S. agencies are not still compiling files and watching American authors, even though the legislation is now supposed to make that practice illegal. “To this day [authors] can be watched and kept on file through what I consider to be a wide opening in the back door of the guidelines.” In fact, the *New York Times* of 21 August 1988 carried a story entitled “F.B.I. Kept a File on Supreme Court,” which outlined how the FBI watched, taped, and wiretapped the judges of the U.S. Supreme Court “from 1932 until at least 1985.”

As this review is written, a former head of the CIA has become President of the United States. However, neither Canadians in general nor Canadian archivists in particular should permit themselves too many superior glances at the United States when the questions raised by Mitgang’s book come up for discussion. In the winter of 1988, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service raided the offices of Radio-Canada in Montreal, and one recalls the RCMP’s raid in recent years on the home of Ottawa author John Sawatsky. A further useful corrective may be obtained by a close reading of Gregory S. Kealey’s article in the Spring 1988 issue of *Labour/Le Travail*, “The Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, the National Archives, and Access to Information: A Curious Tale.”

**John Smart**

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**The Bank of Upper Canada.** PETER BASKERVILLE, ed. Carleton Library Series No. 141. Toronto: The Champlain Society in cooperation with the Ontario Heritage Foundation and Carleton University Press, 1987. cliii, 400 p. ISBN 0-88629-059-7 \$18.95.

For most of the forty years after its organization in 1822, the Bank of Upper Canada was the leading financial institution in Upper Canada. It was a key player in financing Upper Canadian trade during the period, in arranging government finances, and in financing the construction of the basic railway system which was essential to the industrialization of Ontario. In spite of the bank’s importance, Peter Baskerville’s preface to this collection of documents, published by the Champlain Society in cooperation with Carleton University Press, is the first major study of the institution. The reasons for this neglect are not difficult to find; after the bank failed in 1866, ten tons of the bank’s records were sold to a papermaker and reduced to pulp. This edition of records relating to the bank’s history is evidence of how much can be gleaned from related collections of historical documents when the primary collection has been lost.

During much of its existence, the Bank of Upper Canada was derided as a pet bank, created by members of the Family Compact to serve their personal interests, favoured by the government, and unable to survive without government favours.