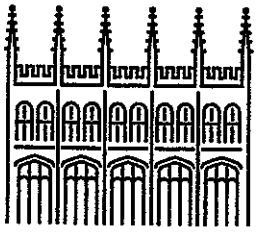
TRADECRAFT

Writers on John le Carré

EDITED BY **FEDERICO VARESE**



BODLEIAN
LIBRARY
PUBLISHING

Contents

John le Carré
The writer's tradecraft

FEDERICO VARESE

> All great works of literature either dissolve a genre or invent one.
> *Walter Benjamin*

On the night of 12 December 2020 John le Carré died. When I heard the news, I was stunned. We had been in touch shortly before, and were planning to meet to discuss a television series on how the world of espionage in Russia had changed since the end of the Cold War. We had all been living cooped up at home during the Covid-19 pandemic, fearing the worst, unsure who might be the next victim of the virus. I knew that he had had some health problems and had just taken a fall, but nothing foreshadowed what happened that night. Death comes unannounced, even for those we regard as invincible.

John le Carré's passing was a personal tragedy, and it remains so to this day. David Cornwell (the writer's real name) had been a constant presence in my life since the early 1990s, from a time when I was single and had no children and no permanent job. David and his wife, Jane, witnessed – and supported – the most important decisions of my existence. Among other things, they gave us wedding gifts, congratulated me on getting my first fellowship and allowed our autistic child Sasha to roam freely throughout their

home, private rooms included.[1] For decades, I had tried to live up to an image of myself I wanted them to have. And now, in rapid succession they were no more (Jane died on 27 February 2021).

It took months for the news to sink in. The death of friends we do not see every day has a peculiar property: we can go on living, pretending they are still with us, that we will meet them again, maybe next summer in Cornwall or, if they are busy, in London in the autumn. While it was slightly delusional on my part to deny the reality, there was a deeper truth in my reaction: the dead never truly go away; they remain among the living, and we continue to converse with them in our heads, adding imaginary exchanges to the stock of our shared past.

The aim of this book and the companion exhibition staged at the Bodleian Library in the autumn of 2025 is to add to those conversations. We delve into our memories and accumulated understanding (also known as scholarship) to keep alive the work of this extraordinary couple. I have gathered together authors who have known and collaborated with John le Carré (Morris, Wrong and Amini), as well as experts on world literature, international relations and spies (Osborne, Boehmer, Matthews, Ruggeri and Soldatov). To place the book's contributions in their appropriate context, I have inserted a brief note at the beginning of each chapter. Two of David's sons, Simon and Nick, have written movingly about their father. A photo of David taken by Stephen Cornwell, their sibling, adorns the cover of the book. The John le Carré Literary Estate, run by Clare Cornwell, David's daughter-in-law, has been extremely supportive of this project in ways that would take pages to detail.

Like me, the contributors are not le Carré specialists and have not written extensively about him. We wanted to hear new voices, learn about new episodes and explore the extent to which this

author resonates beyond traditional fans and the English-speaking world. Above all, we wanted to shine a light on the author's method of work, what we call his *tradecraft*. Le Carré's fans are well aware that he used this expression – first in *Call for the Dead* – to describe the techniques and methods used by spies and intelligence agents. Tradecraft is what is taught at the fictional Sarratt spy school, as well as being a spy's ability to gauge inner motives by observing an opponent's outward signals such as small tics. In le Carré's world, the term was extended to refer also to ways of navigating office politics and intrigue.[2] In this book we use the expression in a way that we hope le Carré would have approved; that is, to refer to his method of working. Several chapters explore how he collected evidence, travelled to places and relied on the help of others to craft his fiction and then oversaw the transition from page to screen.

In this Introduction, interspersed with my memories of David and Jane, I shall focus on three themes that are, in my view, crucial to understanding John le Carré's work: the way he went about collecting information, how the evidence collected is used for the purpose of creating an artistic truth and how he depicts human motivations in subtle ways that echo the most advanced thinking in the social sciences.[3]

'A desk is a dangerous place from which to watch the world'[4]

David wrote to 'Federico Barese [*sic*], Esq.' for the first time in the spring of 1994. I was in the city of Perm in the Urals, collecting material for my doctoral dissertation on the Russian mafia. Mail arriving at my college address in Oxford managed, via a rather elaborate system, to find its way to Perm. I opened the postal bundle while I was on a twenty-two-hour train journey to Moscow, where I was planning to conduct interviews while staying at the flat of my uncle, an Italian journalist for *Il Sole 24 Ore*. Among the

bills and college ads for May balls, I found a handwritten letter on headed paper signed 'John le Carré' followed by 'David Cornwell' (in parentheses). The author needed to use his famous pen name to catch a stranger's attention. The address matched the remote Cornish cliff where the author of *The Russia House* spent most of the year. An initial introduction had been made by Professor John Barber, an expert on Soviet history at King's College, Cambridge, where I had been a student until 1991 (Nick Cornwell was also studying at Cambridge at the time). Le Carré was asking for a meeting to discuss 'a novel which touches upon the Ossetian–Ingusheti conflict, and predicates that part of it is being fought out between rival factions in the West'.[5] Thus began our professional and personal relationship.

I called David from my uncle's office in Moscow and we arranged to meet in Oxford.[6] When I got back, David took me to lunch at Al-Shami, the Lebanese restaurant just opposite the synagogue in Jericho, one of the city's neighbourhoods. I am a stickler for punctuality, but on arrival I found my host already waiting for me, with his back to the wall, in a distant corner of the restaurant. The waiter seemed to know him well. I wondered whether he was a regular or just very good at making friends. During lunch, he told me that he had a Lebanese driver waiting outside, so I assumed he had contacts in that community. Politely, he did not expect me to be familiar with his work (indeed, at that point I had only read *The Russia House*) and gave me a signed copy of *The Night Manager*, recently published: 'It is the US edition; they did a great job with the cover.' He went on to outline the story for his new book briefly and elliptically, and made me do all the talking. He was taking notes in a small, neat and tidy notepad, as he called it in later writings. I noticed, with a certain anxiety, that some of my remarks made their way into the notebook, while

others did not. Thankfully, lunch went well. 'I really enjoyed our meeting', he wrote to me a few days later.[7] Somehow I had passed the test.

A letter from 4 September announced, 'I've sort of finished. Would you like to take a look?'[8] The first draft, loose A4 pages neatly arranged in a cardboard box, was delivered by courier to my college address. I had hardly had time to read the manuscript and send my comments before a new package containing a subsequent draft arrived (I counted some five such deliveries over the course of a few months, all of which are still in my possession). In Chapter 6 Michela Wrong describes how, a few years later, David approached her through her agent, took her to lunch at 'one of those old-fashioned, white-tablecloth, Mayfair restaurants', and shortly afterwards started to send her drafts of *The Mission Song*. As in my case, no indication of the changes he had made was provided, although I noticed that the book was growing in length between one version and the next.[9] Timothy Garton Ash told me a similar story. We can reliably conclude that this was David's modus operandi.

The novel was provisionally titled 'The Passion of his Time'. For several years a retired, somewhat depressed spy named Tim Cranmer had run an agent, the mercurial Larry Pettifer. After the end of the Cold War, Larry had become a respected university lecturer and a fixture at Tim's wine-producing estate in rural Somerset, where he befriended Tim's lover, Emma, a beautiful woman still struggling to define herself. At the start of the story, the police inform Tim that Larry and Emma are missing. We discover in due course that Larry has joined the cause of one of the oppressed peoples of the Caucasus, the Ingush, embezzling large sums of KGB money along the way. Tim's lover, Emma, has become part of Larry's conspiracy, relinquishing along the way her quiet life in the English countryside. I faxed my first comprehensive set of

remarks to David in early October 1994, starting with high praise ('gripping … I was totally taken … perfectly intertwined stories … very well researched'), followed by five single-spaced pages of detailed comments. My aim was to help the author fulfil his vision and at the same time add some authenticity.[10] I approached the job as if I were writing a report on an unpublished book or journal article by a colleague. Academics are prone to gossip, but they accept that referee reports are confidential and never to be spoken of in public. I was going to do the same with David and promised myself never to talk about our exchange. Thirty years later, this is the first time I am relating this episode.

As far as details went, I wanted to prove my deep knowledge of all things Russian: a long section of my document was devoted to the brand of cigarettes the main character would be smoking at the time (either Prima or Belomorkanal); another was on how former members of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union had most probably smuggled party funds out of the country after the end of the Soviet Union. I duly included academic references to the Chechen–Ingush genocide by Stalin supporting David's take on that tragedy.

On the last page I ventured my opinion on 'the narrative structure'. I was in two minds over this: should I, a 29-year-old Italian student with a wobbly knowledge of the English language and literature be offering advice to the master storyteller? I opted for the Oxford Junior Common Room approach to life ('be confident and a tad arrogant') and voiced a small concern: why does Tim Crammer travel to Ingushetia at the end of the novel? David did not seem too convinced about the introduction of a Hitchcockian MacGuffin,

Letter from David Cornwell to Federico Varese, discussing *Our Game* (1995), 7 November 1994.

— but just off to Cornwall.

DAVID CORNWELL

9 Gainsborough Gdns
London NW3

7 Nov 94

Dear Frederico,

Just to tell you, I think I've touched all your points in the rewrite — and I pinched unashamedly your beautiful formulation that Tim doesn't want to find Larry but become him! Once again, I am most grateful. I have done two substantial rewrites, self-imposed, since the last draft you saw, & I am beginning to be satisfied,

always dangerous! But I only have in effect a couple more weeks in which to play with the book, so now I'm going home to Cornwall to meet it again face to face. Meanwhile I have asked Berry Brothers & Rudd to send you a token of my gratitude, but it does not do the whole job! As soon as I have a printed proof, I'll send you one; & I will gratefully enjoy another meeting soon. I'll call you anyway.

Best & Thanks again
David.

suggesting that Tim is going to retrieve the money Larry stole or to find out some information for the spies back home. I thought David should make clear that Tim goes to Ingushetia 'not to meet Larry, but to become Larry'.[11] The loyal secret service operative was now ready to live up to the image of the man he had always wanted to be but never quite achieved; to emulate the Larry who had lived life to the full and with whom Emma had fallen in love. Tim must join Larry's cause, forgo any loyalty to the office and die in the process. 'This is the only way [for Tim] to be loved by Emma for the rest of her life', I mused.[12] David wrote back immediately ('Thanks so much') and on 7 November he added:

> Just to tell you, I think I have touched all your points in the rewrite – and I pinched unashamedly your beautiful formulation that Tim doesn't want to find Larry but to become him! Once again, I am most grateful.[13]

I knew from that moment that a rapport had been established between us that would last a lifetime. I had found a kindred spirit in David, who, as Elleke Boehmer and Steven Matthews note Chapter 2, was 'a committed writer-researcher', happy to accept suggestions but equally free to ignore them. He had a mindset similar to an academic's. We both enjoyed precision, consistency and structure and shared a deep respect for the reader.[14] While a sociologist collects evidence systematically to paint as accurate a picture of reality as possible, a novelist tries to capture an artistic truth and to tell a story along the way. But there is no reason to be sloppy with names, descriptions and cigarette brands. I found myself deeply admiring David's approach, which is rare among novelists and academics alike.

I cannot speak with any authority about the books David wrote before the end of the Cold War. For a period, he wanted us to

believe that he "lived off a fund of past experience," gained from his work for MI5 and MI6. Thus he implied that he had not extensively researched his early books (I beg to differ, but this is the topic for another essay). Then, around 1974, when he had been out of government employment for ten years, David had an epiphany. He had arrived in Hong Kong to work on *The Honourable Schoolboy*, with a bound proof copy of *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* in his bag. The book was in production and would come out soon. In that novel, he had described a pursuit by ferry across the strait between Kowloon and Hong Kong Island. To his horror, he realized that for his scene he had relied on an out-of-date guidebook. In the meantime, a tunnel had been built between the island and the mainland, making a nonsense of his account. Here was the trap of desk research: '[I] swore I would never again set a scene in a place I hadn't visited.'[16] From that moment he promised himself that he would shore up his bank of experience by visiting unfamiliar worlds. Over the years the quest would take him to Cambodia and Vietnam, Israel and Palestine, Russia and Central America, Kenya and eastern Congo.[17] These trips were not, however, the adventures of a wanderer in the German Romantic tradition, as he wanted us to believe. He was not a modern and inferior replica of the Herman Hesse character who gives the title to his 1904 novel *Peter Camenzind*, nor was he a James Bond.

In contrast to Ian Fleming's novels, which often read as a travelogue infused with a degree of Orientalism,[18] David's journeys were an integral part of a systematic approach to storytelling. His method would also take him to more familiar destinations: Canada and the US, Paris, Cornwall, Oxford, Hamburg, Bern, the Swiss Oberland (where he had built a cottage) and the dismal town on the East Anglian Coast that features in his posthumous novel *Silverview* (on the creative process behind this novel, see Chapter 8).

These locations were all part of David's geography and life. London is arguably the setting of most of his work.[19] In *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, George Smiley is introduced to the reader in the dead of night as 'he scuttled along the pavement which skirted the blackened arcades of Victoria Station'.[20] Even in later novels, London, especially Hampstead, where he lived for part of the year with Jane, remains a central character. In *Our Kind of Traitor*, Primrose Hill takes centre stage. As Lawrence Osborne writes in Chapter 3, 'the images are exact and true'.

Reading le Carré's books is a linguistic and emotional experience. They also place the reader in a specific time and space amid real political conflicts. Literary critics have noted that his novels fall within the nineteenth-century literary tradition conventionally labelled 'realism', pioneered by Honoré de Balzac, an author whom le Carré first encountered at Oxford and came to admire greatly.[21] One of the defining characteristics of realism is precise geographical locations. What David added was the political dimension, which makes his fiction among the very best political novels ever written.

David's observational method is crucial for social and political scientists too. All scholars of society, academic or otherwise, should not just watch the world from their desk. Large-scale data sets and library research certainly tell us a great deal about a phenomenon but they do not reveal the whole story. Ultimately, we write about people and places, and we cannot embark on the social science enterprise without ever talking to the former or visiting the latter.

When David went to a place, he mostly liked to wander 'in what seemed an almost aimless fashion', recalls Wrong of their trip to Congo and Rwanda. But he was also a man with a plan. When travelling alone, he would start by finding a local contact, often a journalist such as David Greenway for Cambodia and

Hong Kong (*The Honourable Schoolboy*) or Richard Koster for Panama (*The Tailor of Panama*). Then he would 'leapfrog', asking each interviewee for the names of other people to talk to. In his conversations David made a point of being 'a good listener and not adversarial'.[22] He followed this method throughout his career, doing 'his absolute best to be a fly on the wall'.[23] When he met a Russian mobster in Moscow, he asked him about the moral responsibility he felt for future generations and listened (in that case the answer was short: 'fuck off').[24]

David embraced the methods adopted by ethnographers almost to the letter. We build our 'sample' through the process of 'snowballing' (also known as leapfrogging). In my fieldwork with mafiosi, I played the role of holy fool, never showing off any of my background knowledge and becoming a tiny observer of a foreign universe.[25] Sticking to the advice given early on by the Vatican to Catholic priests receiving confession, I never showed revulsion or moral superiority, even when I was told about the most appalling behaviour. Individuals billed as 'dangerous' love to tell their stories. The best protection for both the ethnographer and the writer-researcher is to have no ulterior motive other than a deep desire to understand, although some ground rules must be followed to keep oneself safe, such as never asking details of who committed which crime. Like David, I never used a tape recorder.

'The Passion of his Time' was published in 1995 as *Our Game* (curiously the Italian edition, *La passione del suo tempo*, retained the original title). This is an overlooked gem of a novel about friendship, frustrated ideals and betrayal that contains a profound political point, questioning Russia's approach to its breakaway republics. It also dispels the Western assumption that the Russian 'democrats' of the era were our friends and could do no wrong. Shortly after le Carré had delivered the manuscript, the first

Chechen war broke out. *Our Game* was not only a profoundly human, but also a very relevant tale. 'Once again, le Carré had predicted the news', commented his American publisher.[26]

The author did not forget 'Federico Varese of Nuffield College, Oxford', who was duly thanked in the acknowledgements. A friend of mine quipped that this was probably the most famous I would ever get, and I agreed. Kind words were not all that I received from David. 'I have asked Berry Brothers & Rudd to send you a token of my gratitude, but it does not do the whole job!'[27] A few days later, I received a case of vintage wine from Britain's oldest wine and spirit merchant, est. 1698. Twelve bottles. They kept me in good stead for the remainder of the term. My standing among fellow students, my supervisor, my then girlfriend and the college porters soared.

'Real truth lies ... in nuance'[28]

In 2013 we were on the terrace of the cottage in Cornwall that my family and I had rented for the summer. David and Jane had come to visit, bringing a treasure trove of cakes and juice for the kids. On the table, we had laid a plate filled with clotted cream and scones. Tea was served Russian style, with leaves brewed in a teapot and then poured into a cup alongside hot water from a makeshift small-sized copper samovar, with fresh mint leaves, lemon and sugar added to the mix.

When we turned to discussing work, David said that he was writing an autobiographical text, provisionally called *The Pigeon Tunnel*, a title inspired by a scene he had observed in Monte Carlo when he was in his mid-teens. Near the casino, there was a shooting range with small underground tunnels that gave on to the sea. The pigeons were made to enter one of the tunnels and, after a journey in the dark, flew free towards the water, to be targeted by club members. The birds that managed to avoid the bullets

returned to the roof where they had been raised and began their tragic routine anew.

In *The Pigeon Tunnel*, le Carré recounts various moments of his life, meetings with illustrious figures such as Yasser Arafat and Margaret Thatcher, research trips to the places described in his novels and childhood reminiscences. Among the episodes he evokes is one from when he was 16. His father had sent him to collect a debt of £500 from the Panamanian ambassador in Paris. The house was near the Élysée, in one of those streets 'that smell permanently of women's scent'.[29] The ambassador's wife, one of the most beautiful beings David had ever seen, opened the door: 'In my memory she is smiling down on me like an angel redeemer.'[30] She had black hair and bare shoulders, and wore a chiffon dress. In the living room, the diplomat, a corpulent self-styled count wearing a velvet jacket, with a hint of grey hair and a virile handshake, awaited him. After a generous round of daiquiris, David gathered the courage to ask for the money he had come to collect only to discover a different truth. 'I rather hoped you might be bringing me a portion of the large sum of money I have invested in your dear father's enterprises', the diplomat replied.[31] For a long moment, David felt on the verge of fainting. In his head, the sofa drapes, silk cushions and mirrors and the countess's legs all blurred together. When he recovered, the hosts invited him to dinner at a restaurant around the corner, where the countess danced flirtatiously with David and continued to drink copiously. Back home, the ambassador announced that it was time to go to bed and his wife casually asked David if he wanted to join them. David made an excuse and fled.

The story as told in these pages evokes some of the central themes of le Carré's life's work: the father's betrayal, the son's innocence violated, his embarrassment, characters who most

likely are not who they claim to be, the impossibility of knowing the truth, a fascinating but unattainable woman. This episode remained etched in David's mind and over the years he tried to trace the aristocrat. He discovered that the man had never been an ambassador in Paris but was a crony of the corrupt dictator Arnulfo Arias, who was deposed in 1951. Arrested briefly in the 1950s, the count eventually disappeared, along with his wife, without a trace.

The Parisian episode is also mentioned, in a few lines, in a monumental and deeply researched biography of John le Carré by Adam Sisman, published in 2015. In that version, David is accompanied by his brother, the countess appears only fleetingly and there is no hint of seduction.[32] Which version should we believe – the writer's or the biographer's?

On the Cornish terrace we discussed the issue of truth and memory, at a moment when Sisman was working on the biography (for which I was due to be interviewed). I remember thinking that the biographer was running into what I called – for want of a better word – a methodological problem. He bases his reconstruction on versions of the episode provided over the years by le Carré himself in interviews and occasional writings. In each version, details are added or omitted.[33] All one can do is point out inconsistencies. There was a second, even more fundamental, difficulty. The writer is after an artistic truth that captures the essence of a situation, not its actuality. The raw material is quickly turned into fiction; indeed, it is immediately contaminated by the art. The Paris episode in itself is of no significance; it has 'only' literary value in David's rendering. This is what David meant when he told Errol Morris in the 2023 film *The Pigeon Tunnel* that almost everything he says is false. 'Even when you are telling the truth, you lie', Axel Hampel states in the famous passage in *A Perfect Spy* where he declares Magus Pym to be indeed 'a perfect spy'.[34]

David tried to explain to me a question that brings into sharp relief the distinction between a writer and a scholar conducting fieldwork. When he went into the field, David was many people: he was constantly accompanied by the fictional characters taking shape in his head. When he was shot at across the Mekong River in 1974, the real David *was* Jerry Westerby, the protagonist of *The Honourable Schoolboy*. David called this process 'conversations with my secret sharer', an expression he borrowed from Conrad's short story of the same name. This is a variation on the well-known literary device of the doppelgänger, a German word that means 'double walker'.[35] The doppelgänger often stands in contrast to the main character, as the evil twin. For instance, in Conrad's story the good captain comes to the aid of his other, who is a murderer. But the other can be complementary, as in the Platonic conception of twin souls as recounted in Aristophanes' speech in the *Symposium*. The other makes an incomplete self whole.

David saw himself as a sundered personality. Rather than writing fiction that contained a self and an other, as E.T.A. Hoffmann, Edgar Allan Poe, Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Jorge Luis Borges did,[36] he was the other half of his characters, with whom he was in continual dialogue. He came to know himself through his fictional characters: the lived experience is vicarious and falsified by the artistic enterprise. 'The more identities a person has, the more they express the person they conceal', Smiley muses at one point.[37]

David never denied the existence of facts. He was anything but a postmodernist. He had no doubt, for instance, that the Rwanda genocide had taken place. When he was an interrogator for MI6, he was after a factual truth that could protect the realm. In Chapter 1, Errol Morris makes a similar point: 'For me, as for David, truth is not subjective.' An absent third party is in possession of all the naked facts, knows all the dirty dealings and all the good deeds.

We strive to reach that truth but along different paths, according to our chosen profession and our talent – or lack of it.

Everything that came from David's pen should be interpreted as an artistic truth, no more and no less. And yet such a truth helps us understand reality. For instance, his work played a major role in Cold War revisionist historiography.[38] Until the 1960s, the main interpretation of Western espionage was that of a struggle between good democrats who were defending themselves and evil communists who were attacking blameless guys. Le Carré's overturned the view that the West was simply involved in a defensive form of espionage.[39] His interpretation influenced historians who began to seek empirical support for that particular view. Later on, he highlighted the dark side of globalization, the corroding influence of money in politics and the dangers of privatizing security (see Chapter 4). To the scholar, novels are sometimes the equivalent of a plausible new theory waiting to be supported by hard facts. To paraphrase the German poet Novalis, fiction arises from the shortcomings of historiography.[40]

There is a further dimension relating to the creation of artistic truth in David's work. Very early in our discussions, I broached the topic of how mafiosi learn how to behave from movies, a phenomenon to which Diego Gambetta, my DPhil supervisor, had alerted me.[41] Although cinematic fiction is often incorrect about the workings of the mafia, real members model their behaviour on films – to the point that they learn by heart the lines they hear in movies. Al Capone copied his attire from a 1912 film, *The Musketeers of Pig Alley*, directed by D.W. Griffith, which is considered to have been the first gangster movie. Fiction is particularly effective at inspiring would-be mobsters because the mafia is a secret organization that cannot broadcast its ways. But it is effective for full members too. They know that the public expects

them to behave as they are depicted in films, even though these are works of fiction.

David told me that the same thing was happening with his books. At that point I was reminded that I was talking to a man who had influenced the zeitgeist no less than Francis Ford Coppola with *The Godfather*. The words le Carré had introduced into the English language, such as *lamplighters*, *babysitters*, *scalp hunters* and *Circus*, were now used by real spies (for his impact on the KGB, see Chapter 5), and young operatives even copied his characters' wardrobe. David added that having such an impact gave him a particular responsibility: every time he wrote something he was conscious of the effect it might have on reality. The artist's responsibility is not only to his art, a point he made in his 1989 polemic against Salman Rushdie on the risks to which reprinting *The Satanic Verses* would expose translators and booksellers.[42]

Shortly after his trip to Paris, the young David left the prestigious private school chosen for him by his father and moved to Bern, where he discovered classics of German literature such as Heinrich Heine, Friedrich Schiller and Thomas Mann, and decided to write. From an early age, he had experienced a tension between embracing people and institutions – family, a woman, school, social class, government – and escaping them. Le Carré felt like those pigeons that give the title to his autobiography of sorts. Every attempt to free oneself from one's obsessions, from one's past, is futile. Sisyphus is condemned to push a boulder up a mountain for ever, only to see it roll down again just as it nears the top. Rebellion is noble but destined to fail, and yet it is worthy of a lifetime's commitment. Camus said it better: 'The struggle itself towards the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy.'[43]

I received a letter from David in late January 2009. He and Jane were spending two luxurious weeks in Madeira, at the Reid's Palace Hotel on the main island of the archipelago. Built at the end of the nineteenth century, the hotel had once boasted a distinguished clientele, including George Bernard Shaw and Winston Churchill, who wrote his memoirs there. 'I have been planning a new novel', David wrote. The topic was Russia, 'the new one, or the old one dressed up as the new one'. The letter contained an invitation: 'I wondered whether I might come up to Oxford and pick your brains over a pleasant lunch somewhere?' His interest in Russia should be put into context: the world was still grappling with bankers' greed and the 2008 financial crisis. David wanted to weigh in: 'I particularly like the bonuses that bankers are still paying themselves!'[45]

We had lunch at Gees in Oxford on 17 February. We sat on the lush veranda in an almost empty restaurant. His tiny black notebook was once again deployed, the same type I had seen since our first meeting in 1994. David briefly outlined the central idea for the plot. He wanted to write about the bankers' lack of moral compass and collusion at all levels with the British government. The story would also include Russian money laundering in the mix. His intuition was that dirty capital had saved the world banking system. Then he told me: 'I need a villain.' As it happened, I had one to offer.

At the time I was working on a book provisionally titled *Mob and Mobility*, which would appear in 2011. Among other things, I had been researching the life of a Russian mobster who had moved to Rome in the 1990s, where he had become a key conduit for money-laundering operations for a significant portion of the Russian underworld. He had been working with so-called private banks, including one in the City of London, which were

instrumental in injecting dirty funds from Russia into the international financial system. Above all, he had been trying to get accreditation to open a bank in London. My man was also a member of the criminal fraternity of the *vory-v-zakone* (literally thieves-in-law). Representing the pinnacle of the Russian mafia, the *vory* had originated in the Soviet Gulag in the 1920s and had featured prominently in my doctoral thesis. They have rituals, rules and a secret language, and cover their bodies in tattoos. They control most of the Russian underworld, some of the overworld and many prisons. The mafia boss I had met in Perm in the mid-nineties was also a member of the fraternity and had first alerted me to their importance in both Soviet and post-Soviet times.[46] Now I had the chance to make a *vor* the protagonist of a John le Carré novel.

David wrote back on 18 February: 'that was such a stimulating meeting that my head, in the most positive sense, is still reeling! ... It was truly wonderful.'[47] He also wrote himself a fifteen-page summary of our get-together.[48]

David was keen to ensure that my work was rewarded, so we signed a collaboration contract, which contained a confidentiality clause.[49] By this time, our communications were mostly by email, some of which have survived. David's messages now included greetings from Jane who, I had come to understand, was deeply involved at every stage of the production of David's books. In the following months, I received several versions of the manuscript by courier and met David and Jane to discuss progress. As usual, they were busy with film projects, changed publishers (to Penguin) and were saddened by the death of David's first wife, Ann.

On 21 April David announced, 'here are the first hundred pages or so. You will very quickly see the areas where I need your advice.' The missive covered six pages. The business part ended as follows:

I look forward very much to our meeting, as soon as you have managed to read the material. Everything is changeable, nothing is set in stone.'[50] And yet the central character was already beautifully drawn.

Dima, a member of the *vory*, is a bald muscular man with a huge torso covered in elaborate tattoos, who wears a diamond-encrusted gold Rolex. He hails from the city of Perm in Russia – 'not the hairdo, darling. The town'[51] – and speaks broken English but knows how to make himself understood. After a spell in the Soviet Gulag for killing his mother's lover, he goes to work for the most important syndicate, which in time comes to be headed by the Prince, a new-generation mobster who is ready to get into bed with both the Russian and the British governments and to ditch the traditional *vory* code of conduct once cherished by his father. Dima knows where the money is hidden and that, as soon as he relinquishes control of the purse, he and his family face certain death. The novel opens in Antigua, where a young English couple are taking an off-season holiday. Gail is a 'sparky rising barrister', while her boyfriend, Perry, is a lanky, principled tutor in English at Oxford.[52] On the second day of their holiday the resort coach tells them that Dima wants a game of tennis. The encounter sets the plot in motion.

Overtly, the novel is an indictment of the British establishment, which is ready to accept money from anyone, no questions asked. Defectors must be punished rather than allowed to reveal embarrassing secrets, and the threat of terrorism is used to conceal state assassinations. As usual, the book was not only perfectly structured but also timely. David's intuition that dirty funds had helped save the world financial system was supported by no less than Antonio Maria Costa, head of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, who gave a high-profile interview to

the *Observer*, published on 13 December 2009.[53] David and I were delighted by such an authoritative endorsement of the novel's premise. David even reproduced the article in one advance proof I received in early 2010. Wisely, the reproduction was removed in the final print. *Our Kind of Traitor* has two key additional themes that have been ignored by critics: the nature of truth (once again) and trust.

When Gail and Perry contact the British Secret Service to reveal Dima's proposition, they are asked to recount the chain of events. Each of them is interrogated separately and asked to write their own account of the events. The two versions do not quite match, even when narrating situations in which they were both present.[54] They saw the scene from different angles, their motives differ and their memories are selective. While basic facts are undisputable, nuances matter. The past does not come to us fully narrated: it is not already *cuit* (cooked). Even two innocents abroad who love each other deeply keep secrets. Small acts of betrayal can go hand-in-hand with enduring love. Interrogators too have different agendas: one finds Gail attractive while another is preoccupied with the secret schemes of the bosses back in London. Is anybody really interested in the naked truth?

The second unrecognized theme of the book is trust, a crucial ingredient in the world of spying, where the expectation is that everybody is playing multiple games and motives are 'mixed'.[55] MI6 first needs to establish if Dima is genuine and then wants his secrets without having to offer much in return. Within MI6 and the British establishment, different people have different agendas: some want to do the right thing, others are after a promotion, one wants to get back at a colleague and some are secretly colluding with the enemy.[56] Dima, for his part, wants safe passage to England for himself and his family for betraying *his* boss. Gail and Perry

are the most interesting players: initially, they are just a conduit of information, informing the British about their encounter with Dima, then they act as agents of trust. They start to care about Dima and his young children, who in turn come to believe in Gail and Perry's genuine feelings. Thus, the two innocents abroad are the only ones who can convince Dima of the good intentions of the British government. Dima thinks that Perry and Gail would not lie to him and that the British are less likely to lie to (or kill) their citizens than him. Dima ends up trusting the English couple – a fatal mistake. Our kind of traitor is the one we elaborately dupe.

Working intensively with David was, as usual, an education. Once again, I was allowed to 'look up his sleeves'.[57] He obsessed over details and enlisted several people to check the accuracy of the text, including the managers of two Swiss hotels, a research assistant, a professor of modern languages at Bern University and an investment banker. His family had vacationed for fifty years at Bern's Bellevue Palace Grand Hotel, and yet he went one more time to walk the route that Dima was to take to escape from the Prince's clutches. He was at the 2009 Roland-Garros final between Roger Federer and Robin Söderling, sitting in the same hospitality box where Dima, his fellow mafiosi and assorted crooks met Gail and Perry. David had compiled a file on each character, planning all their moves and prying into their souls. He was a general leading his troops. In one of the last messages we exchanged about the book, he told me: 'Every novel has its watershed chapter. In this novel, the watershed is Chapter 6. In creative terms, the writing is all downhill from here: Paris, Bern, bureaucratic intrigues back in London, grim resolution.'[58]

Our Kind of Traitor was published in 2010. The *New York Times* called it 'a bullet train of a thriller'. For the London *Times*, 'there is not a hair out place'.[59] As usual, David included a very generous

acknowledgement of my role. It made me proud. As Simon Cornwell mentions in his foreword, I went on to consult on the film. In Chapter 7, Hossein Amini tells the story of what happened next and, along the way, gives us a lesson in scriptwriting.

Coda: the memorial service

The eleventh of October 2021 was a cloudy day. I was on my way to Micklefield Hall, a sixteenth-century country estate in Sarratt, Hertfordshire, and the home of the Edmonds family. Dick Edmonds had been an early friend of David's in the 1950s, with whom he shared a passion for skiing. As a young man, David had been a regular guest at Micklefield Hall and le Carré fans know that the fictional Sarratt, 'the Circus's refurbished training school', is modelled on the place I was about to visit.

As I arrived by taxi, the staff directed me towards the restored barn where the event was to take place, perfectly organized by Dick Edmonds's daughter and her family. Tim Cornwell, David's third son, who had just finished editing the marvellous collection of his father's letters, greeted me warmly. We hugged, a most unusual gesture for both of us. The reality of the situation was now creeping in. Old friends and distinguished literary figures were also making their way in. As is usual for an event in England, we all wondered if it was going to rain (it did). The mood was sombre yet joyful. It was a chance for me to catch up with David's grandchildren, now old enough to be parents themselves. But I also learned of the passing of Rupert Cornwell, David's half-brother, who had been *The Independent*'s chief of bureau in Moscow in the 1980s. I was a great admirer both of his reporting from Moscow and Washington and of his books.

There was much of David's life that I discovered that day: his passion for skiing, his talent for drawing and his friendship with

Tom Stoppard. I especially enjoyed talking to his father Ronnie Cornwell's side of the family, who still live in Poole and are not part of the literary world. They opened up a window on David's ties to his aunts and nieces.

Halfway through the event, extracts of the yet-to-be-released film *The Pigeon Tunnel* were shown to the audience, sitting in religious silence. We heard David talking about his craft with unusual candour. At one point he whispered, with typical circumspection and modesty, what seemed a confession:

> I dare hardly use the claim, but I'll make it here:
> I am an artist.

On that day I learned a lot about David. That he was an artist I had known all along. Afterwards, photos of David and Jane hugging flickered across the giant screen. It was time for me to accept reality and bid farewell.

1931 19 October: David John Moore Cornwell is born in Poole, Dorset.
1936 His mother, Olive Cornwell, leaves the family.
His father, Ronnie Cornwell, is declared bankrupt.
1939 Goes to board at St Andrew's School, Pangbourne, Berkshire.
1945 Goes to board at Sherborne School.
1948 Leaves Sherborne School to study German at Bern University.
Recruited by British intelligence services to report on left-wing student groups.
1950 Drafted for National Service.
1952 Matriculates at Lincoln College, Oxford.
1953 Recruited by MI5 to spy on left-wing groups at Oxford.
1954 Engaged to Ann Sharp.
Teaches at Millfield Preparatory School.
27 November: marries Ann Sharp.
1956 Graduates with first-class honours from Oxford University.
Starts teaching French and German at Eton College.
29 October–7 November: Suez Crisis.
1957 7 March: birth of first child, Simon.
1958 Joins MI5.
1960 Moves to MI6.
29 March: birth of second son, Stephen.
1961 *Call for the Dead* is published. From now on, writes under the pseudonym of John le Carré.
Moves with family to Bonn, where he is the British Embassy second secretary.
12–13 August: Berlin Wall goes up overnight.
1962 *A Murder of Quality* is published.
6 November: birth of third son, Timothy.
1963 *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold* is published.
23 January: Kim Philby defects to the USSR.
1964 *The Sunday Times* names John le Carré as David Cornwell.
Resigns from the Foreign Office.
Lives with family in Crete and Vienna.
The Spy Who Came In from the Cold wins the Somerset Maugham Award.
1965 *The Looking Glass War* is published.
The film *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold* is released.

1967 *The Film The Deadly Affair* (based on *Call for the Dead*) is released.
1968 *A Small Town in Germany* is published.
1969 Starts building a chalet in Wengen, Switzerland, and a permanent home in Tregiffian, Cornwall.
1971 *The Naive and Sentimental Lover* is published.
Divorces Ann Sharp.
1972 Marries Valerie Jane Eustace.
26 November: birth of fourth son, Nicholas.
1974 *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* is published.
1975 17 April: Phnom Penh occupied by the Khmer Rouge led by Pol Pot.
30 April: Saigon occupied by North Vietnam; South Vietnam surrenders.
29 June: his father, Ronnie Cornwell, dies aged sixty-nine.
1977 *The Honourable Schoolboy* is published. It wins the Crime Writers' Association Gold Dagger.
1979 BBC television series *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* is released.
Smiley's People is published.
1982 BBC television series *Smiley's People* is released.
1983 *The Little Drummer Girl* is published.
1984 The film *The Little Drummer Girl* is released.
1986 *A Perfect Spy* is published.
1987 BBC television series *A Perfect Spy is* released.
1988 *A Perfect Spy* is awarded the Malaparte Prize.
1989 His mother, Olive Hill, dies aged eighty-three.
The Russia House is published.
9 November: fall of the Berlin Wall.
1990 *The Secret Pilgrim* is published.
The film *The Russia House* is released.
1991 The television film *A Murder of Quality* is broadcast in the United Kingdom and the United States.
1993 *The Night Manager* is published.
1995 *Our Game* is published.
1997 *The Tailor of Panama* is published.
1999 *Single & Single* is published.
2000 *The Constant Gardener* is published.
2001 The film *The Tailor of Panama* is released.
2003 The article 'The United States of America Has Gone Mad' is printed in *The Times* and syndicated worldwide.

Absolute Friends is published.
20 March: the Iraq War starts.

2005 The film *The Constant Gardener* is released.
Awarded the French government's Commandeur de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres.

2006 *The Mission Song* is published.

2008 *A Most Wanted Man* is published.

2009 Penguin becomes le Carré's publisher.

2011 Awarded Germany's Goethe Medal.
The film *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* is released.

2012 Receives honorary doctorate of letters from Oxford University.

2013 *A Delicate Truth* is published.

2014 The film *A Most Wanted Man* is released.

2015 Adam Sisman's *John le Carré: The Biography* is published.

2016 The television series *The Night Manager* is broadcast.
The film *Our Kind of Traitor* is released.
The Pigeon Tunnel is published.
23 June: the United Kingdom votes to leave the European Union.

2017 *A Legacy of Spies* is published.

2019 *Agent Running in the Field* is published.

2020 Receives the Olof Palme Prize.
Receives Irish citizenship.
12 December: dies at Royal Cornwall Hospital.

2021 27 February: Jane Cornwell dies at home in Cornwall.
Silverview is published.

2022 31 May: Timothy (Tim) Cornwell, John le Carré's third son, dies from a pulmonary embolism.
A Private Spy: The Letters of John le Carré 1945–2020, edited by Tim Cornwell, is published.

2024 Nick Harkaway's *Karla's Choice: A John le Carré Novel* is published.
The Spy Who Came In from the Cold, adapted for the stage by David Eldridge, premieres at the Chichester Festival Theatre.

2025 1 October: The exhibition *Tradecraft: John le Carré* opens at the Bodleian Libraries in Oxford and runs until 6 April 2026.
November: A stage play of *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold* opens at the Soho Place theatre.

2026 Season 2 of *The Night Manager* is broadcast.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. Jane Cornwell to Galina Varese, 15 April 2009, Varese Family Archive, Ferrara, Italy and Witney, UK. All subsequent references to letters and emails are from this archive.
2. Contrary to some views and according to its definition in the *OED*, the term 'tradecraft' used in the context of espionage was not invented by le Carré.
3. A fourth theme I shall not touch on for reasons of space is le Carré's masterly description of the inner working of institution life, office politics and the logic of bureaucracies.
4. John le Carré, *The Honourable Schoolboy*, Penguin, London, 2018, p. 74.
5. John le Carre (JLC) to Federico Varese (FV), 3 May 1994.
6. JLC to FV, 6 June 1994.
7. JLC to FV, 28 June 1994.
8. JLC to FV, 4 September 1994.
9. FV to JLC, 14 October 1994.
10. As JLC said in an interview, the ultimate aim of the writer is to craft a plausible story rather than one that is authentic in all details (George Plimpton, 'John le Carré: The Art of Fiction', *The Paris Review*, no. 149, 1996, p. 60).
11. FV to JLC, 14 October 1994.
12. Ibid.
13. JLC to FV, 7 November 1994, emphasis original. 'Maybe you don't want to find your friend, but to become him', John le Carré, *Our Game*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1995, p. 299.
14. See also letter from Jane to David's publisher, 27 October 1993, cited in Adam Sisman, *John le Carré: The Biography*, Bloomsbury, London, 2015, p. 352: 'He hates inaccuracy.'
15. John le Carré, *The Pigeon Tunnel: Stories from my Life*, Viking, London, 2016, p. 71.
16. Ibid. See also John le Carré, 'The Constant Muse', *Guardian*, 25 February 2001.
17. Le Carré, *The Pigeon Tunnel*, p. 72.

18. Simon Willmetts, 'The Many Realisms of John le Carré', *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2023, pp. 204–17, at p. 209.
19. Herb Lester, in *John le Carre's London* (Herb Lester Associates, London, 2022) has identified some fifty-one relevant locations.
20. John le Carré, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1974, p. 19.
21. Plimpton, 'The Art of Fiction', p. 53; Sisman, *The Biography*, p. 208.
22. Plimpton, 'The Art of Fiction', p. 59.
23. Ibid., p. 71.
24. Ibid. See also le Carré, *The Pigeon Tunnel*, p. 131; John le Carré, 'My New Friends in the New Russia: In Search of a Few Good Crooks, Cops and Former Agents', *New York Times*, 19 February 1995.
25. Federico Varese, *Mafia Life*, Profile Books, London, 2017, p. 6. In the poem titled '1929' W.H. Auden writes about being a 'Tiny observer of enormous world'. See my discussion of fieldwork in Varese, *The Russian Mafia*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001, pp. 9–13; and Varese, 'Rigorous Ethnography', in *Handbook of Sociological Science: Contributions to Rigorous Sociology*, ed. K. Gerxhani, N.D. de Graaf and W. Raub, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 2022, pp. 215–31.
26. *A Private Spy: The Letters of John le Carré*, ed. Tim Cornwell, Viking, London, 2022, p. 644.
27. JLC to FV, 7 November 1994.
28. Le Carré, *The Pigeon Tunnel*, p. 6.
29. Ibid., p. 189.
30. Ibid., p. 190.
31. Ibid., p. 192.
32. Sisman, *The Biography*, pp. 61–2.
33. Sisman also noted that different versions of the Paris episode exist and asks, 'which are we to believe?' ('John le Carré and I Worked for Years on his Biography: Why Is He Telling his Own Story 12 Months Later?' *Guardian*, 16 September 2016). In 'Recensione: "Tiro al Piccione" di John le Carré e "John le Carré: La biografia" di Adam Sisman', *Corriere della Sera-Lettura*, 2 October 2016, p. 15, I argue, following the Italian literary critic Pietro Citati, that books on writers' lives should be 'biographies of the spirit'. For different versions of the Paris episode, see John le Carré, 'In Ronnie's Court', *The New Yorker*, 18 and 25 February, 2002, p. 147; le Carré, *The Pigeon Tunnel*, p. 189; and John le Carré, 'Spying on My Father', *Sunday Times Review*, 16 March 1986.
34. John le Carré, *A Perfect Spy*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1986, p. 421.
35. Doppelgänger, 'so people who see themselves are called', was first used by Jean Paul Richter in the novel *Siebenkäs* (1796). See scholarly discussions in A.J. Webber, *The Doppelgänger: Double Visions in German Literature*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996, p. 58; and M. Živković, 'The Double as the "Unseen" of Culture: Toward a Definition of Doppelgänger', *Facta Universitatis*, vol. 2, no. 7, 2000, pp. 121–8, at p. 122.
36. Some might consider Larry to be Tim's doppelgänger, but it would be a stretch.
37. Le Carré, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, p. 227.

38. For a fuller articulation of this point, see Willmetts, 'The Many Realisms of John le Carré', pp. 204–17.
39. John le Carré, *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold*, Penguin, London, 2010, p. 18. See also John le Carré, 'To Russia, with Greetings', *Encounter Magazine*, May 1966, pp. 3–7, at p. 4. A forerunner of this interpretation was Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* (1955), although the 1950s were not as receptive to the idea as the 1960s. For a discussion, see Willmetts, 'The Many Realisms of John le Carré', p. 214. The issue of defensive versus offensive spying is particularly relevant in discussions of the ethics of spying, as shown by Cecile Fabre, *Spying Through a Glass Darkly*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2022.
40. The sentence 'Novels arise out of the shortcomings of history' appears in Novalis's collection *Fragmente und Studien* (1799–1800).
41. Diego Gambetta, *Codes of the Underworld*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 2011, pp. 251–74.
42. See John le Carré, 'Shame on You, Mr Rushdie', *Guardian*, 19 November 1989. Most famously, John le Carré helped to popularize the term *mole*, although it had already been used in the 1920s to refer to a 'deep penetration agent'. See *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. 'mole'.
43. Albert Camus, *Le mythe de Sisyphe*, Hamish Hamilton, London, 1955, conclusion.
44. John le Carré, *Our Kind of Traitor*, Penguin, London, 2010, p. 49.
45. JLC to FV, 29 January 2009.
46. For my work on the *vory* see, e.g., Varese, 'The Society of the *Vory-v-Zakone*, 1930s–1950s', *Cahiers du Monde Russe*, vol. 39, no. 4, 1998, pp. 515–38; Varese, *The Russian Mafia*; F. Varese, J. Lonsky and Y. Podvysotskiy, 'The Resilience of the Russian Mafia: An Empirical Study', *The British Journal of Criminology*, vol. 61, no. 1, pp. 143–66. Le Carré discusses the *vory* in *The Pigeon Tunnel*, pp. 136–46.
47. JLC to FV, 18 February 2009.
48. The text starts: 'Federico Varese 17 Feb 09 Met Federico at Gees Oxford for Lunch'; at this stage the character is still called Yakov (Oxford University, Bodleian Library, John le Carré Archive, BOD 22984, boxes 92–95, 19–21).
49. With the fee I received, I bought a large antique mahogany partners' desk with a double-sided layout, a leather top and nine cock-beaded drawers with brass handles. Only later did I realize that it was quite similar to David's.
50. JLC to FV, 21 April 2009. An extract of the letter appears in *A Private Spy*, pp. 498–9.
51. Le Carré, *Our Kind of Traitor*, p. 18; see also pp. 23, 45 and 7.
52. Ibid., pp. 5–6. According to Sisman, the two characters are a composite of David's son Nick and his wife, Clare, and other thirty-something friends of the family, such as 'Federico Varese, the young Professor of Criminology at Oxford' (*The Biography*, p. 583).
53. Rajeev Syal, 'Drug Money Saved Banks in Global Crisis, Claims UN Advisor', *Observer*, 13 December 2009.
54. 'If you and I witnessed the same car accident, each would have a different version of what happened' (JLC to Morris in *The Pigeon Tunnel*, at 1:19.)

55. David might have picked up from our conversations the expression 'mixed motives'. This is a technical concept used in the branch of applied math known as game theory. A 'game' is a formal model of a strategic interaction in which the outcome of an individual's action depends not only on their own choices but also on the actions of other participants, whose interests may align, conflict, or partially overlap with theirs. The economics Nobel prizewinner Thomas C. Schelling, whose work I greatly admire and use extensively in my writing, refers to these games as, respectively, 'mutual interest', 'pure conflict' and 'mixed motive'. The most interesting games formalized by Schelling – and before him by John Nash – are the mixed-motives' ones. Mixed-motive games are pervasive not just in spying but also in everyday life, international relations and the business world. See T.C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1960.
56. In keeping with the principles of Max Weber's methodological individualism, institutions do not exist; only individuals do. For a classic discussion of methodological individualism, see Jon Elster, 'Marxism, Functionalism, and Game Theory: A Case for Methodological Individualism', *Theory and Society*, vol. 11, no. 4, 1982, pp. 453–82.
57. Morris, *The Pigeon Tunnel*, at 0:44. See also David's discussion of his method in George Plimpton, 'The Art of Fiction', p. 58.
58. JLC to FV, 3 July 2009. In chapter 6 Perry tells the MI6 operative Hector about his meeting with Dima. This letter to me is reprinted in *A Private Spy*, pp. 502–3.
59. M. Kakutani, 'Innocents Caught in a Web of Intrigue', *New York Times*, 11 October 2010, www.nytimes.com/2010/10/12/books/12book.html; P. Millar, 'Return of the Master', *The Times*, 11 September 2010.
60. From information in Sisman, *The Biography*; Tim Cornwell (ed.), *A Private Spy*; personal communications with Adam Sisman and JLC literary estate.

ONE

1. In *The Little Drummer Girl* Charlie, who needs to build trust with the people she is trying to spy on, asks her recruiter, 'who's the audience?' (John le Carré, *The Little Drummer Girl*, Penguin, London, 2018, p. 160). This passage is discussed by Boehmer and Matthews in Chapter 2.
2. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, Schocken Books, New York, 1969, p. 116.
3. John le Carré, *The Pigeon Tunnel*, Penguin, London, 2016, p. 307.
4. John le Carré, *The Secret Pilgrim*, Penguin, London, 1991, p. 209.
5. Henrik Ibsen, *Peer Gynt and Brand*, Penguin, London, 2016, p. 313 (act 5, scene 5).
6. 'Verwirrende Lehre zu verwirrtem Handel waltet über die Welt' (*Complete Works of Goethe*, Berlin, 1832, vol. 44, p. 28; author's translation).
7. Ibsen, Peer Gynt, p. 314 (act 5, scene 7).
8. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, trans. A.J. Krailsheimer, Penguin, London, 1995, section I, ch. xi, 'APR'.

TWO

1. 'I recall with particular gratitude the help of Strobe Talbott, the illustrious Washington journalist, Sovietologist and writer on nuclear defence. If there are errors in this book, they are surely not his, and there would have been many more without him' (John le Carré, *The Russia House*, Penguin, London, 2020, p. 7).
2. Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* [1946], trans. W. Trask, 50th anniversary edn, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 2003.
3. Willmetts, 'The Many Realisms of John le Carré', p. 208.
4. *A Private Spy*, pp. 180, 519; Plimpton, 'The Art of Fiction', p. 53.
5. David Cornwell, interviewed by Jon Snow, Channel 4 News, 13 September 2010, www.channel4.com/news/le-carr-betrayed-by-bad-lot-spy-kim-philby (accessed 12 December 2023).
6. John le Carré, *The Pigeon Tunnel*, Penguin, London, 2017, p. 176.
7. John le Carré, 'Fifty Years Later', in *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, Penguin, London, 2014, p. 275.
8. The quotations are taken from Warwick Research Collective, *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature*, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 2015, pp. 16–17. The concept of a 'combined and uneven' world is from Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System*, Academic Press, Cambridge MA, 1974.
9. R.L. Walkowitz, *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2015. On world-making, see also P. Cheah, *What Is a World? On Postcolonial Literature as World Literature*, Duke University Press, Durham NC, 2016; D. Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?* Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 2003.
10. John le Carré, *The Honourable Schoolboy*, Penguin, London, 2020, p. 495.
11. John le Carré, *The Secret Pilgrim*, Penguin, London, 2020, pp. 132–3.
12. John le Carré, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, Pan, London, 1975, p. 297.
13. Le Carré, *The Honourable Schoolboy*, p. 139.
14. Ibid., p. 177.
15. Ibid., pp. 109, 383.
16. *The Secret Pilgrim*, p. 8.
17. *The Honourable Schoolboy*, p. 495.
18. Ibid., p. 411.
19. *The Pigeon Tunnel*, p. 26.
20. In *The Honourable Schoolboy*, for instance, Smiley's surprising response to mention of the Italian town of Lucca is to ask 'Did you know the poet Heine had a great adventure there? A romance?' (p. 129). However, as a sign of le Carré's lack of faith in the moral improvement that great literature might induce, Lorbeer, the big pharma adviser in *The Constant Gardener*, has a copy of Heine on his bookshelves (John le Carré, *The Constant Gardener*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 2005, p. 541).
21. David Cornwell, 'John Le Carré's Final Interview on British TV' (with Jon Snow), www.youtube.com/watch?v=VxWTlbhoHpQ (accessed 29 October 2023).

22. John le Carré, *Smiley's People*, Penguin, London, 2020, p. 167.
23. Le Carré, *The Secret Pilgrim*, p. 210.
24. Le Carré, *The Pigeon Tunnel*, pp. 87, 215.
25. Le Carré, *A Private Spy*, p. 451.
26. Ibid., pp. 191, 120.
27. Le Carré, *The Secret Pilgrim*, p. 247.
28. John le Carré, *The Little Drummer Girl*, Penguin, London, 2018, pp. 158–60.
29. Le Carré, *A Private Spy*, p. 453; the quotation is from Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), a work of anticolonial critique with which le Carré was familiar.
30. Le Carré, *The Constant Gardener*, p. 412.
31. Ibid., pp. 560–61.
32. Le Carré, *A Private Spy*, p. 454.
33. Le Carré, *The Secret Pilgrim*, p. 388.

THREE

1. See Y. Pierpaoli, *La femme aux milles enfants*, Robert Laffont, Paris, 1992. See also le Carré, 'The Constant Muse', *Guardian*, 25 February 2001.
2. For a perceptive reconstruction of le Carré's visit, see Paul French, 'Tunnel Vision: John le Carré's Time in Hong Kong and the Spy Novelist's "shame" at a Detail He Got Wrong about the Colony', *South China Morning Post*, 9 July 2023, www.scmp.com/magazines/post-magazine/long-reads/article/3226812/john-le-carres-time-hong-kong-and-spy-novelists-shame-detail-he-got-wrong-about-colony (accessed 27 September 2024). See also H.D.S. Greenway's obituary of Peter Simms, 'A Life at the Empire's End', *Boston Globe*, 6 December 2002; and R. Hughes, *Foreign Devil: Thirty Years of Reporting from the Far East*, Century, London, 1984.
3. Le Carré, *The Honourable Schoolboy*, Penguin, London, 2020, p. xiii. See also le Carré, 'The Constant Muse'.
4. Ibid., p. 237
5. Ibid., p. 411. See also Chapter 2, above.
6. Ibid., p. 411.
7. Le Carré, *The Pigeon Tunnel*, p. 74.
8. *Dangerous Edge: A Life of Graham Greene*, dir. Thomas Patrick O'Connor, 2013.
9. Sisman, *The Biography*, p. 363.
10. Le Carré, *The Honourable Schoolboy*, p. 416.
11. James Fenton, *Out of Danger*, Penguin, London, 1993.
12. Le Carré, *The Honourable Schoolboy*, p. 146.
13. Ibid., p. 139.
14. R. Hughes, *Hong Kong, Borrowed Place, Borrowed Time: Hong Kong and Its Many Faces*, Andre Deutsch, London, 1976, p. 13.
15. Le Carré, *The Honourable Schoolboy*, pp. 11–12.
16. Ibid., p. 142–3.
17. Ibid., p. 143.

FOUR

1. See, e.g., John le Carré, *Our Game*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1995, pp. 212, 79. This is also my view: see Federico Varese, *Russia in Four Criminals*, Polity, Cambridge, 2024.
2. John le Carré, 'In Place of Nations', *The Nation*, vol. 272, no. 14, 2001, pp. 11–13.
3. In earlier novels, Smiley too is described as motivated by religious zeal, though not fanatism. See, e.g., *The Honourable Schoolboy*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1977, pp. 135, 144.
4. John le Carré, 'The United States of America Has Gone Mad', *Sunday Times*, 15 January 2003.
5. Le Carré, *The Honourable Schoolboy*, p. 478.
6. Le Carré, *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold*, Gollancz, London, 1963, p. 20.
7. E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, Macmillan, London, 1939; H.J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, New York, 1948.
8. W. Wilson, 'Address to a Joint Session of Congress on the Conditions of Peace ["The Fourteen Points"]', 8 January 1918, www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-joint-session-congress-the-conditions-peace-the-fourteen-points; N. Angell, *The Great Illusion*, G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1933; R. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 1984; and J.S. Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, PublicAffairs, New York, 2004.
9. R.W. Cox, 'Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, 1983, pp. 162–75; G. Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power and the Origins of our Times*, Verso, London, 1994.
10. C. Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, University of California Press, Berkeley CA, 2014.
11. M. Walzer, *A Foreign Policy for the Left*, Yale University Press, New Haven CT, 2018; M. Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, Basic Books, New York, 1977.
12. John Halperin, 'Between Two Worlds: The Novels of John le Carré', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 79, no. 1, 1980, p. 18.
13. K.N. Waltz, *Man, the State and War*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1959.
14. Le Carré, 'The United States of America Has Gone Mad'.
15. Le Carré, 'In Place of Nations', p. 13.
16. Z. Maoz and B. Russett, 'Normative and Structural Causes of Democratic Peace, 1946–1986', *American Political Science Review*, vol. 87, no. 3, 1993, pp. 624–38.
17. S. Rosato, 'The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory', *American Political Science Review*, vol. 97, no. 4, 2003, 585–602; E. Gartzke, 'The Capitalist Peace', *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 51, no. 1, 2007, pp. 166–91.

18. John le Carré, *A Small Town in Germany*, William Heinemann, London, 1968, p. 362.
19. D.M. Edelstein, *Occupational Hazards: Success and Failure in Military Occupation*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY, 2011.
20. *The Secret Pilgrim*, Alfred. A. Knopf, New York, 1990, p. 321.
21. M.J. Aronoff, *The Spy Novels of John le Carré: Balancing Ethics and Politics*, Springer Macmillan, Houndmills, 1998, p. 39.
22. Le Carré, *A Small Town in Germany*, p. 339.
23. John le Carré, *The Looking Glass War*, William Heinemann, London, 1965, p. 66.
24. S. Davies, T. Pettersson and M. Öberg, 'Organized Violence 1989–2022, and the Return of Conflict between States', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 60, no. 4, 2023, pp. 691–708.
25. V. Meier, N. Karlén, T. Pettersson and M. Croicu, 'External Support in Armed Conflicts: Introducing the UCDP External Support Dataset (ESD), 1975–2017', *Journal of Peace Research*, vol. 60, no. 3, 2023, pp. 545–54.
26. Le Carré, *Our Game*, p. 212.
27. S. Gates, H. Hegre, H.M. Nygård and H. Strand, 'Development Consequences of Armed Conflict', *World Development* 40, no. 9, 2012, pp. 1713–22.
28. Le Carré, *The Secret Pilgrim*, p. 9.
29. Ibid., p. 408.
30. Le Carré, 'In Place of Nations', p. 11.

FIVE

1. *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, *The Honourable Schoolboy* and *Smiley's People*.
2. Sisman, *The Biography*, p. 353.
3. 'Ivanov Sergei Borisovich: Lichnoe Delo' [Sergei B. Ivanov: Profile], *Kommersant*, 7 June 2017, www.kommersant.ru/doc/3319193 (accessed 8 October 2024); 'Na Minnom Pole Razvedki: Ispoved' professionala, Evgenii Primakov' [In the Minefield of Intelligence: Confession of a Professional, Evgeny Primakov], *SVR*, 22 November 2006, http://svr.gov.ru/smi/2006/11/krzv20061122.htm (accessed 8 October 2024).
4. 'Gostivshii u le Carré sovetskii razvedchik opisal byt pisatelya: on byl rabotyagoi' [A Soviet Intelligence Officer Invited to le Carré's House Described his Life: He Was a Workaholic], *Govorit Moskva*, 14 December 2020, https://govoritmoskva.ru/news/256723 (accessed 8 October 2024).
5. T. Fordy, 'Adoring Soviet Students and Drunken Nights with the KGB: John le Carré in Russia', *The Telegraph*, 15 December 2020, www.telegraph.co.uk/books/authors/adoring-soviet-students-drunken-nights-kgb-john-le-carre-russia (accessed 8 October 2024).
6. 'Ubit s Soglasiya Velikobritanii?' [Killed with Great Britain's Approval?], *TASS*, 23 March 2021, https://tass.ru/obschestvo/10966193 (accessed 8 October 2024).
7. Mikhail Lyubimov, 'Angliiskii club shpionov' [English Spy Club], *Ogonyek*, 19 January 1997, www.kommersant.ru/doc/2284602 (accessed 8 October 2024).

8. N. Dolgopolov, 'V Moskve otkrylas' pamyatnaya doska v chest' velichaishego razvedchika Kima Filbi' [In Moscow the Plaque of the Greatest Intelligence Officer Kim Philby Is Unveiled], *Rossiskaya Gazeta*, 10 December 2010, https://rg.ru/2010/12/10/filbi.html (accessed 8 October 2024).
9. A.L. Muraviev, 'Za tekh kto v pole: Geroi Nezrimogo fronta na ekrane I v zhizni' [For Those in the Field: The Heroes of an Invisible Front in Life and on the Screen], https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/za-teh-kto v-pole-geroi-nezrimogo-fronta-na-ekrane-i-v-zhizni/viewer (accessed 8 October 2024).
10. Asawin Suebsaeng, 'How the Actor Donatas Banionis Inspired Vladimir Putin to Become a Spy', *Daily Beast*, 7 September 2014, www.thedailybeast.com/how-the-actor-donatas-banionis-inspired-vladimir-putin to become-a-spy (accessed 8 October 2024).
11. Graham Greene, 'Introduction', in Kim Philby, *My Silent War*, Grafton, London, 1968.
12. Russian editions of *A Small Town in Germany* can be found at https://fantlab.ru/work360684 (accessed 8 October 2024).
13. V. Voinov, 'John le Carré: ukrotitel' shpionov' ['John le Carré: Spy Tamer'], *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, 16 October 1965. See also L.N. Huesing, 'Cultural Détente: John le Carré from the Cold to the Thaw', *Theses* 168, https://irl.umsl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1168&context=thesis (accessed 8 October 2024).
14. John le Carré, 'To Russia, with Greetings: An Open Letter to the Moscow Literary Gazette', *Encounter*, vol. 26, no. 5, May 1966, pp. 3–6.
15. A. Soldatov, 'How a Renegade "Middle Eastern Mafia" Invented Modern Russian Espionage', *Daily Beast*, 14 June 2021, www.thedailybeast.com/how-a-renegade-middle-eastern-mafia-invented-modern-russian-espionage (accessed 8 October 2024).
16. 'Letters on C.I.A. Shown in Moscow', *New York Times*, 27 May 1976, www.nytimes.com/1976/05/27/archives/letters-on-cia-shown-in-moscow-editor-in-a-cbs-interview-says.html (accessed 8 October 2024).
17. A. Teylor, 'Moscow Hadn't Accused a U.S. Reporter of Spying since the Cold War – Until This Week', *Washington Post*, 31 March 2023, www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/03/31/nicholas-daniloff-evan-gershkovich (accessed 8 October 2024).
18. Richard Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand*, John Murray, London, 2001, pp. 449–50.
19. How this strategy was developed within the PGU is described in A. Soldatov and I. Borogan, *The Compatriots: The Brutal and Chaotic History of Russia's Exiles, Émigrés, and Agents Abroad*, Public Affairs, New York, 2019, ch. 18.
20. Ibid.
21. Shebarshin says it's a quote but he does not give any details of its source.
22. Leonid Shebarshin, *Ruka Moskvy* [Hand of Moscow], https://archive.agentura.ru/text/biblio/ruka.txt (accessed 8 October 2024).
23. 'KGB: Vchera, Segodnya, Zavtra Conference' [KGB: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow Conference], https://grigoryants.ru/doc/KGB-vchera-segodnya-zavtra-V-konferenciya.doc (accessed 8 October 2024).

24. C. Walton and C. Andrew, 'What Spies Really Think about John le Carré', *Foreign Policy*, 26 December 2020, https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/12/26/what-spies-really-think-about-john-le-carre (accessed 27 September 2024).
25. M. Trudolyubov, 'Chuzhoi geroi nashei strany' [A Foreign Hero of our Country], *Vedomosti*, 12 January 2018, www.vedomosti.ru/opinion/columns/2018/01/12/747580-chuzhoi-geroi (accessed 8 October 2024).
26. N. Gevorkyan, 'Yuri Kobaladze: Davaite podozhdem naznacheniya' [Yuri Kobaladze: Let's Wait for the Appointment], *Kommersant*, 21 January 1999, www.kommersant.ru/doc/211452 (accessed 8 October 2024).
27. Y.I. Drozdov, 'Tsepnoi pes imperialisma' [A Chain Dog of Imperialism], *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 27 July 2007, https://nvo.ng.ru/spforces/2007-07-27/7_pes.html (accessed 8 October 2024).
28. Ibid.
29. L. Stolyarenko, 'Mikhail Lyubimov: Umnyi chelovek poleznee dvukh razvedok' [Mikhail Lyubimov: A Smart Man Is Smarter than Two Intelligence Services], *Novaya Gazeta*, 4 June 2014, https://novayagazeta.ru/articles/2014/06/04/59835-mihail-lyubimov-171-umnyy-chelovek-poleznee-dvuh-razvedok-187 (accessed 8 October 2024).
30. M. Lyubimov, 'Dobraya Staraya Anglia – da porazit tebya siphilis!' [Good Old England – May Syphilis Strike You!], *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 30 May 2022, www.kp.ru/daily/27398/4595194 (accessed 8 October 2024).
31. Ibid.

SIX

1. Michela Wrong, *In the Footsteps of Mr Kurtz: Living on the Brink of Disaster in the Congo*, 4th Estate, London, 2001.
2. John le Carré, *The Mission Song*, Penguin, London, 2018.
3. John le Carré, 'My Date with the Warlords', *Telegraph*, 10 September 2006, www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/3655227/My-date-with-the-warlords.html.

SEVEN

1. P. Wolff, *Corridors of Deceit: The World of John le Carré*, Bowling Green State University Popular Press, Bowling Green OH, 1987.
2. Ibid., p. 31.

Further reading

Notable studies on le Carré

Aronoff, M., *The Spy Novels of John le Carré: Balancing Ethics and Politics*, Springer, New York, 1998.

Beene, L., *John le Carré*, Twayne, New York, 1992.

Blistène, P., and D.V. Puyvelde, 'John le Carré, Spy Fiction and Intelligence', *Intelligence and National Security*, special issue, vol. 38, no. 2, 2023, pp. 193–318.

French, P., 'Tunnel Vision: John le Carré's Time in Hong Kong and the Spy Novelist's "Shame" at a Detail He Got Wrong about the Colony', *South China Morning Post*, 9 July 2023.

Garton Ash, T., 'The Real le Carré', *New Yorker*, 15 March 1999, pp. 36–45.

Halperin, J., 'Between Two Worlds: The Novels of John le Carré', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol. 79, no. 1, 1980, pp. 17–37.

Homberger, E., *John le Carré*, Routledge, London, 2019.

Manning, T., *John le Carré and the Cold War*, Bloomsbury, London, 2020.

Sisman, A., *John le Carré: The Biography*, Bloomsbury, London, 2015.

Sisman, A., *The Secret Life of John le Carré*, Profile Books, London, 2023.

Snyder, R.L., *John le Carré's Post-Cold War Fiction*, University of Missouri Press, Columbia, 2017.

Willmetts, S., 'The Many Realisms of John le Carré', *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2023, pp. 204–17.

Wolff, P., *Corridors of Deceit: The World of John le Carré*, Bowling Green State University Popular Press, Bowling Green OH, 1987.

Other literary studies

Cheah, P., and D. Damrosch, 'What Is a World (Literature)? A Conversation', *Journal of World Literature*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2019, pp. 305–29.

Warwick Research Collective, *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature*, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 2015.

Webber, A.J., *The Doppelgänger: Double Visions in German Literature*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996.

Živković, M., 'The Double as the "Unseen" of Culture: Toward a Definition of *Doppelgänger*', *Facta Universitatis*, vol. 2, no. 7, 2000, pp. 121–8.

Key literary works

Conrad, J., *The Secret Sharer*, 1912.
de Balzac, H., *La comédie humaine*, 1829–48.
Fanon, F., *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961.
Greene, G. *The Quiet American*, 1955.
Heine, H., *Selected Verse*, 1830–56.

Understanding le Carré's world

Aldrich, R., *The Hidden Hand*, John Murray, London, 2001.
Bizot, F., *The Gate*, Harvill, London, 2003.
Carson, A., *Secret Wars: Covert Conflict in International Politics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 2018.
Fabre, C., *Spying through a Glass Darkly*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2022.
Greenway, H.D.S., *Foreign Correspondent: A Memoir*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 2014.
Gunitskiy, S., *Aftershocks: Great Powers and Domestic Reforms in the Twentieth Century*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 2017.
Hughes, R., *Foreign Devil: Thirty Years of Reporting from the Far East*, Century, London, 1984.
Pepper, A., and D. Schmid, *Globalization and the State in Contemporary Crime Fiction: A World of Crime*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2016.
Philby, K., *My Silent War*, Grove Press, New York, 1968.
Pierpaoli, Y., *La femme aux milles enfants*, Robert Laffont, Paris, 1992.
Schiller, F., *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* [*On Naive and Sentimental Poetry*], Wagner, Augsburg, 1823.
Stearns, J.K., *Dancing in the Glory of Monsters: The Collapse of the Congo and the Great War of Africa*, PublicAffairs, New York, 2011.
Swain, J., *River of Time*, Heinemann, London, 1995.
Varese, F., *The Russian Mafia*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001.
Varese, F., *Mafias on the Move: How Organized Crime Conquers New Territories*, Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 2011.
Wrong, M., *In the Footsteps of Mr Kurtz: Living on the Brink of Disaster in the Congo*, 4th Estate, London, 2000.

Acknowledgements

This book would never have seen the light of day without the steadfast dedication of several people at the Bodleian Library. Richard Ovenden, Bodley's Librarian, has ensured that the Library would become the home of the John le Carré Archive, thus David's wish to leave his papers at Oxford was fulfilled. Richard asked me to edit this book and curate the companion exhibition. For smoothing out every hiccup along the way, I owe him a significant debt.

Samuel Fanous, Head of Publishing at Bodleian Library Publishing, expertly steered the production process, while Janet Phillips, Editor at Bodleian Library Publishing, discussed the structure and content with me, offering invaluable suggestions. The photographs are an essential part of this book. We owe a great debt to Leanda Shrimpton, Picture Editor at Bodleian Library Publishing, who located and helped select the images and cleared copyright. Susie Foster expertly managed the copy-editing process and Dot Little designed the cover. The book benefited greatly from the care of Lucy Morton in bringing it to press.

The children of David and Jane have encouraged this project in all possible ways. I have had numerous discussions with Simon, Nick and Clare Cornwell. Their advice on contributors was invaluable, and they made the necessary introductions.

Clare Cornwell, Managing Director of the John le Carré literary estate, facilitated production in every conceivable way. Vicki Phillips guided me on my last visit to Tregiffian. Working on this collection has allowed me to feel once more part of David and Jane's family.

To the contributors, who took time from their schedules to engage with me and guarantee this project's success, I am profoundly grateful.

As the author of a chapter in this book, I incurred further debts. I had the privilege of having Michela Wrong read and edit my chapter. Needless to say, the text was greatly improved. Galina Varese, ever perceptive, refreshed my memory, suggested toning down several passages and spared me from errors. Barbara del Mercato and Vania Facchinelli rose to the occasion as always. Irene Enriques, Luca Enriques, Paul Klemperer, Adrienne LeBas, Colin Mills, Julian Roberts and Emilia Ziosi also offered helpful comments. I was fortunate to have the ear of Adam Sisman, who read my chapter in progress and offered extensive comments on the book's proofs. I am deeply grateful. Lucy McCann, Senior Archivist, Bodleian Libraries Special Collections, guided me through the le Carré archive with patience and expertise. The Department of Sociology and Nuffield College at Oxford provided, as usual, a conducive environment to reflect upon the nature of fieldwork and social science methodology. I dedicate my chapter to Sasha Varese, who knew David and Jane and lived through most of the events narrated there without saying a word.

I was able to work on this project thanks to a grant from the European Research Council under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Grant No. 101020598–CRIMGOV).

FEDERICO VARESE