

**Novel Ideas:
Archives in English-Canadian Literary Life and Fiction, 1960-2017**

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
The University of Manitoba
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of History (Archival Studies)
Joint Master's Program
University of Manitoba/University of Winnipeg

Winnipeg, Manitoba

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Abstract

Since the 1960s, archives have become increasingly significant in the Canadian literary world. Literary archives, as such, or the records of novelists, poets, and playwrights, now occupy an important place in many Canadian archives. Other types of archives – from institutional records to the personal archives of non-literary figures – have been increasingly used by literary figures to write novels and other works. As well, archives and archivists themselves have become central to the plot lines of many literary works. Literary uses of archives thus affect societal understanding of historical events and the formation of collective memory, yet this overall literary phenomenon often remains invisible, as few have noted the wide and expanding roles of archives within it. Despite their importance, and although they have been used by scholars and others, they have seldom been made an object of study by archivists, historians, or other scholars. The purpose of this thesis is to provide an introductory overview of these developments: the emergence of literary archives in Canada; the uses of archives by Canadian literary figures to write English-language historical fiction; and, based mainly on a selection of twenty-first century historical fiction, examples of how archives and archivists have been depicted in such literary work. By examining these three key examples of the connection between literary work and archives, this thesis aims to highlight the literary value of archives in Canada as a distinctive topic of study and encourage further exploration of its many aspects.

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank Professor Tom Nesmith and Professor Greg Bak for sharing their knowledge of archives and providing many opportunities throughout my time in the Archival Studies Program. A special thanks to Tom for engaging with me on the topic of this thesis and encouraging me to pursue it, and for the useful feedback along the way.

I am grateful to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for generously supporting my research.

To my classmates, thank you for your friendship and solidarity.

To my family and friends, thank you for your unwavering support and encouragement during the production of this thesis.

Finally, Jamie, thank you for believing in me, keeping me sane, and making me laugh throughout all of my studies and in life.

Introduction

Canadian archives and the Canadian literary world engage with one another in a number of interesting and important ways, and have done so in increasingly significant ways throughout the past half century. Especially since the Can-Lit Boom of the 1960s, English-language literature written by many Canadians has received acclaim worldwide and CanLit — and its validity as a genre representative of all Canadians — has been widely studied and discussed. Records created by the Canadian literary world, such as the records of novelists, poets, playwrights, journalists, and publishing houses, began to be pursued and collected by Canadian archival institutions in a flurry that began in the 1960s, and kept up momentum in the following decades of the twentieth century.

Although collecting mandates have evolved in Canada, the collection of literary records remains an important part of collecting mandates in many archives across the country today. Since the emergence of Canadian literary archives, the collection of literary records has been a topic of discussion in the archival world as archivists, scholars, and researchers consider how best to acquire, appraise, describe, and provide access to literary materials in archives, and preserve the historical records of the literary world.

Canadian authors have not only donated their records to archives, but have also made increasingly good use of other types of archival records in their own work — from institutional records to the personal archives of non-literary figures. Novelists, playwrights, and literary historians have used records accessible in archives for historical evidence and as inspiration for the plots or characters of fictional works set in the past. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, Canadian historical fiction writers, in particular, have written a growing number of novels and plays for which they have made

use of archival records. Historical fiction that has employed archives has been very popular in Canada, and many thousands of copies of such novels have been sold. For many people, reading historical novels might be their principal means of receiving some understanding of the past. Thus, the uses of archival records by Canadian fiction writers may well have a significant impact upon the collective memory and societal understanding of historical events.

As well as using archival records to create works of fiction, authors' placement of archives and archivists in the plots of their novels is yet another important way that archives and the literary world intersect in Canada. Especially in the latter decades of the twentieth century, archives and archivists began to appear more often in works of fiction, newspapers, documentaries, and other works. Archivists noted that those representations were frequently surrounded with unflattering or negative stereotypes, and expressed concern that the public understanding and perception of the archival profession would be skewed as a result. Stereotypical depictions of archives and archivists have also made appearances in many Canadian fictional literary works since the beginning of the twentieth century, including as central figures or themes.

Archivists are concerned with the ways that archives intersect with literature, as literary works have the ability to direct public attention towards archives in positive ways. Canadian literary figures who are also champions of archives include novelists Margaret Atwood and Aislinn Hunter. Following the publication of her 1996 novel *Alias Grace*, for which she consulted archival records to piece together as much of the 'real story' of the life and experiences of her protagonist as she could find, Atwood praised and thanked archivists for acting as the "guardian angels" of records, stating: "without

them, there would be a lot less of the past than there is, and I and many other writers owe them a huge debt of thanks.”¹ Hunter also points readers towards the value of archives. She cites archival records as the inspiration for her 2014 novel *The World Before Us*, and has warmly thanked archivists for keeping records and making them available to researchers like her. Perhaps as a result of her positive experiences conducting archival research, she favourably portrayed an archivist as the protagonist of her novel — a long awaited improved image for fictional archivist characters.² Recognizing that authors are valuable advocates of archives through their work and their public voices, Canadian archivists have made efforts to connect with literary figures and to highlight the intersections between archives and Canadian literary work.

Canadian archivists, and other archivists worldwide, have signified their attention to the phenomenon by inviting literary figures to speak at archival conferences, and by including literary topics or highlighting the works of archives-using authors in conference sessions and activities. In recent years, the Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA) has featured the intersections between archives and literature at its annual conferences. In 2003, Canadian actor R.H. Thomson gave the keynote paper at the annual ACA conference, during which he spoke of his experience using archival records and the records of his own family to write the play *The Lost Boys: Letters from the Sons in Two Acts*.³ The 2007 ACA conference gave prominence to an authors’ plenary titled “Archives: Between Fact and Fiction” featuring Canadian poet, novelist and playwright

¹ Margaret Atwood, “In Search of *Alias Grace*: On Writing Canadian Historical Fiction,” *The American Historical Review* 103 no. 5 (1998): 1513-1515.

² Aislinn Hunter, interview by Shelagh Rogers, “Aislinn Hunter on *The World Before Us*,” *CBC Radio: The Next Chapter*, July 4, 2015 (original air date September 22, 2014), 15:30-16:39, accessed December 4, 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/radio/thenextchapter/aislinn-hunter-david-carpenter-1.3115903>; Hunter, acknowledgements in *The World Before Us* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada: 2014), 416-417.

³ Tom Nesmith, “What’s History Got to Do With It?: Reconsidering the Place of Historical Knowledge in Archival Work,” *Archivaria* 57 (Spring 2004): 19, 24.

Helen Humphreys and Canadian poet and novelist Michael Redhill. Both authors spoke of the role of archival materials in the publication of their novels *Leaving Earth* (1997) by Humphreys and *Consolation* (2006) by Redhill, and contributed to the conversation on depictions of history through fiction.⁴ The 2009 ACA conference included a presentation of the play *Letters from Battle River: The Adventures of Dr. Mary Percy Jackson*, which was produced by director David Cheoros and archivist/dramaturge Karen Simonson. The play is based on the letters of Dr. Jackson at the Provincial Archives of Alberta.⁵ Most recently, Gail Bowen, a Regina playwright and author of murder mystery novels, was invited to give the keynote paper at the 2015 ACA conference, and to share her perspectives as both a user and donor of archival materials.⁶ By spotlighting the connections between archives and the creation of literary works at their annual conferences, Canadian archivists indicate that they place a high value on relationships with the Canadian literary world.

In efforts to create or maintain relationships with literary figures, archivists have pointed out a number of ways that they might better serve the needs of authors and maintain positive relationships with literary figures that might donate their records to archives in the future. Catherine Hobbs, literary archivist at Library and Archives Canada, has pointed out that by making personal contact with literary donors, openly

⁴ Michael Redhill and Helen Humphreys, "Archives – Between Fact and Fiction," annual conference, Association of Canadian Archivists, Kingston ON, June 22, 2007, accessed March 29, 2017, http://members-archivists.ca/conference_proceedings.aspx.

⁵ *Letters from Battle River: The Adventures of Dr. Mary Percy Jackson* by David Cheoros & Karen Simonson, Glenbow Museum, Calgary, May 15, 2009, annual conference of the Association of Canadian Archivists, accessed March 31, 2017, <http://www.archivists.ca/content/past-conferences>. A published version of the play is in David Chereos, Karen Simonson, and Debbie Marshall, *Her Voice, Her Century: Four Plays About Daring Women* (Victoria, BC: Brindle & Glass Publishing, 2012). The book's dedication page reads: "To archivists everywhere, and the researchers who love them."

⁶ Gail Bowen, "25 Years of Writing Joanne Kilbourn Shreve," annual conference, Association of Canadian Archivists, Regina, SK, June 11, 2015, accessed March 6, 2017, http://members-archivists.ca/conference_proceedings.aspx.

communicating with writers about their concerns about access and privacy, paying attention to the relationships between authors and their records, and understanding the larger literary scene, archivists may influence the content and accessibility of literary archives. Hobbs suggests that archivists' relationships with writers may ensure that Canada's "literary archives in the future will more faithfully reflect the wide scope of Canadian literary culture and reveal something of the writer's shaping of the creative space on the page."⁷

American archivists Cary G. Osborne and Caryn Radick encourage archivists to consider fiction writers as "serious researchers" although non-traditional, and to learn about the needs of novelists and better help them discover inspiration in the archives, to make archives more accessible to writers, and to help authors become aware of the valuable role archives may play in their research.⁸ They point to the role archivists can play in informing fiction writers of the wealth of information and inspiration that may be found in archives and the opportunities for promoting archives to encourage new and continuing uses by authors.⁹ Meanwhile, archivists have also acknowledged that their relationships and interactions with the public influence the way they and the archival profession are perceived and understood. Upon surveying the negative stereotypes that surround the archival image in works of fiction, archivists have concluded that to reverse societal misconceptions of the archival profession, they must find ways to counter those images by "popularizing their own images of the profession to replace inaccurate or

⁷ Catherine Hobbs, "New Approaches to Canadian Literary Archives," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, (Spring 2006): 109-119.

⁸ Cary G. Osborne, "Information-Seeking Behavior of Novelists in Archives," *Journal of Western Archives* 1, no. 1 (2010): 1-7; Caryn Radick, "Romance Writers' Use of Archives," *Archivaria* 81 (Spring 2016): 45-73

⁹ Osborne., 6-7; Radick, "Romance Writers' Use of Archives," 67.

negative images” and, further, “shap[ing] the stereotypes regarding the profession [into] something dynamic and relevant.”¹⁰ Archivists have encouraged fellow archivists to consider how they come across to the public, and to improve that image by engaging with users, appealing to the general public, and “throw[ing] in a little geniality.”¹¹ Conceivably, by improving the way the public — and authors of fictional works — view and appreciate archives and archivists, representations of the archival image in fiction and other works might also improve.

Despite the importance of the relationship between archives and literature for the formation of collective memory, understanding of the archival profession, and the preservation of history, it has seldom been an object of study by archivists, historians, or other scholars. The purpose of this thesis is to provide an introductory overview of these developments in Canada: the emergence of literary archives in Canada; the uses of archives by Canadian literary figures to write English-language historical fiction; and, based on a selection of Canadian novels, a survey of how archives and archivists have been depicted in those works, and whether the archival image has improved over time. By examining these three key examples of the connection between literary works and archives, this thesis will highlight the literary value of archives in Canada as a distinctive topic of study and encourage further exploration of its many aspects.

¹⁰ Karen Buckley, “‘The Truth is in the Red Files’: An Overview of Archives in Popular Culture,” *Archivaria* 66 (Fall 2008): 122-123; Arlene Schmuland, “The Archival Image in Fiction: An Analysis and Annotated Bibliography,” *The American Archivist* 62 (Spring 1999): 53; Tania Aldred, Gordon Burr and Eun Park, “Crossing a Librarian with a Historian: The Image of Reel Archivists,” *Archivaria* 66 (Fall 2008): 85-86.

¹¹ Terry Eastwood, “As Others See Us: Archivists and Society,” closing plenary address, annual conference of the Association of Canadian Archivists, Kingston ON, June 23, 2007, accessed Feb 25, 2017, http://members-archivists.ca/conference_proceedings.aspx; Mark Greene, “The Power of Archives: Archivists’ Values and Value in the Postmodern Age,” *The American Archivist* 72 (Spring/Summer 2009): 18; Radick, “Romance Writers’ Use of Archives,” 68.

Chapter one of this thesis gives a historical overview of the rise of literary archives in Canada. While scholars have explored the histories of Canadian archives, literature, universities, and culture more broadly, the emergence of Canadian literary archives has not received much academic attention.¹² Using those broader histories for historical context, this chapter outlines the early history and maturation of Canadian literature and archives. The developments of archives and literature progressed largely apart from one another in Canada until a pronounced flourishing in Canadian literary culture occurred in the mid-twentieth century, and drew on archival materials and led to the collection of literary records in archives to preserve the history of Canadian literature.

It should be noted that a canonization of Canadian literature in English-speaking Canada occurred as English-speaking Canadian authors came to the fore in the 1960s. Not all such Canadian literature was considered successful. Rather, nationalistic ideals narrowly thought to be “representative of all Canadians” were promoted by newly established Canadian councils and informed the themes and narratives in novels that were chosen for publication and considered “work[s] of significant value” at this time.¹³ These novels were the first of ‘CanLit,’ a genre of highly reviewed, “culturally relevant” Canadian literature that has in recent decades been criticized for its early nationalistic and colonial values, and exclusion of many Canadian and especially Indigenous voices.¹⁴ The

¹² These include: Paul Litt, *The Muses, the Masses and the Massey Commission* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992); Reingard M. Nischik, ed., *History of Literature in Canada* (New York: Camden House, 2008); Maria Tippett, *Making Culture: English-Canadian Institutions and the Arts before the Massey Commission* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); Jonathan F. Vance, *A History of Canadian Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹³ Rebecka Sheffield, “‘We’d lose our Shirt!’: How Canada’s Cultural Policy has Shaped the Canadian Literary Canon,” *Faculty of Information Quarterly Housing Memory Conference Proceedings* 1, no. 3 (2009): 6-8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* For more on discussions of the Canadian literary canon see also: Natalia Aponiuk, “Ethnic Literature, Minority Writing, Literature in Other Languages, Hyphenated-Canadian Literature: Will It Ever Be Canadian?” *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 28, no. 1 (1996): 1-7; Laura Moss, “Notes From A CanLit Killjoy

flaws in the Canadian literary canon are mirrored in early collecting patterns of Canadian literary archives.¹⁵ Archivists did not seek to collect all literary papers, but pursued the papers of authors whose work aligned with a particular canonical version of “Canadianness” and were considered “culturally significant” at the time. These issues of colonial biases’ influences upon literary collecting in archives — in the early days of literary collecting and up until the present day — are not examined in this thesis, but are an important topic for further research and perhaps another thesis. This chapter outlines the beginnings of Canadian literary archives and their early acquisitions of Canadian literary papers, and early enthusiasm for studying and preserving the records of the Canadian literary world. Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that, although the term Canadian literature in this chapter and in the rest of this thesis refers mainly to CanLit and its rise to an acclaimed genre of Canadian literature, other literary works by Canadians even outside of the “canon” ought also to be considered Canadian literature more broadly defined.

This chapter culminates in an examination of the formation of literary archives in Canadian universities and public archives, and an exploration of leading emerging literary archives in the latter decades of the twentieth century. This chapter concludes with an overview of current themes relating to Canadian literary archives that have

1,” *Canadian Literature* 228/229 (Spring/Summer 2016): 6-17; Smaro Kamboureli and Roy Miki, eds., *Trans.Can.Lit: Resituating the Study of Canadian Literature* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007).

¹⁵ See for example the Marvin Francis fonds at the University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections. Francis, a poet and Ph.D. student at the University of Manitoba in the early 2000s spoke about the lack of papers created by Indigenous authors in the University of Manitoba Archives, and wrote the unpublished paper “Archiving Aboriginal Literary Work in Canada: (archive deprived, looking for red, and archiva saliva);” and Barbara Romanik, “Go West: Urbanism, Mobility, and Ingenuity in Western Canadian Writing and Everyday Practice,” (PhD diss., University of Manitoba, 2014), 175, accessed August 10, 2017, https://mspace.lib.umanitoba.ca/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1993/30401/romanik_barbara.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

appeared in academic and archival discussions about literary and personal archives in recent years. A close examination of the issues surrounding the actual management of current literary archives, however, whether in analogue or digital form, is not the aim of this thesis. That important topic merits separate attention and readers may wish to consult the growing literature on the subject.¹⁶

Since the emergence of Canadian literary archives in the 1960s, archives and the Canadian literary world have become closely intertwined in a number of different ways. The remaining chapters of this thesis examine how the Canadian literary world and archives intersect even beyond Canadian archives' acquisition of notable records relating to the Canadian literary world. Chapter two discusses English-language works of fiction that have been written through Canadian authors' uses of archives, and the immense expansion of this list of Canadian titles since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Aside from an important and oft-cited published 1996 lecture by Margaret Atwood titled "In Search of *Alias Grace*: On Writing Historical Fiction," few articles detailing the uses of archives by authors of fiction have been published. Rather, playwrights, poets, or novelists' uses of archives are more commonly made known through the acknowledgements sections of their books, interviews or press releases during which authors are asked to discuss their sources of inspiration and/or how their research was conducted, and in book reviews. To write this chapter, I explored many such interviews,

¹⁶ See Maryanne Dever, Sally Newman, and Ann Vickery, "The Intimate Archive," *Archives and Manuscripts* 38, no.1 (2010): 95-137; Jennifer Douglas, "The Archiving 'I': A Closer Look in the Archives of Writers," *Archivaria* 79 (Spring 2015): 53-89; Jennifer Douglas and Heather MacNeil, "Arranging the Self: Literary and Archival Perspectives on Writers' Archives," *Archivaria* 67 (2009): 25-39; Catherine Hobbs, "New Approaches to Canadian Literary Archives," 109-119; Catherine Hobbs, "The Character of Personal Archives: Reflections on the Value of Records of Individuals," *Archivaria* 52 (2001): 126-135.

and share in it the fascinating approaches Canadian authors of historical fiction have taken to incorporate archives into their work.¹⁷

Many Canadian authors have written highly acclaimed novels using archives. These include Margaret Atwood's novel *Alias Grace* (1996), Lawrence Hill's treatment of slavery in colonial British America in *The Book of Negroes* (2007), Frances Itani's novels *Deafening* (2003) and *Tell* (2014), set during and after the First World War, and Ami McKay's story of women's rights in the Maritimes around the time of that war in *The Birth House* (2006). This chapter also considers how authors' placement of otherwise little known historical information from archives in their novels may influence societal understanding of historical events and the formation of collective memory.¹⁸

The second chapter of this thesis concludes by pointing to the growing relationship between archives and Canadian authors as a result of authors' successful uses of archival materials in their work. Authors are encouraged to continue sharing their experiences using archival materials to bring historical information to readers and to bring archives into public view.

¹⁷ Many historical novelists also use archives more indirectly — by using information from histories that are *themselves* based on archives — and this may be another major way that archives affect historical novels. Chester Brown's bestselling historical graphic novel *Louis Riel: A Comic-Strip Biography* (2003) is an example; while Brown quotes from and refers to archival sources such as court transcripts, he cites secondary sources based on those records rather than citing archival records themselves. Although these indirect uses of archives are also of interest, this chapter focuses on novelists' *direct* uses of archives through personal archival research, and contributions to the publicly perceivable relationship between archives and Canadian novels as a result of their praise of archivists or acknowledgements of these uses.

¹⁸ According to Geoffrey Cubitt: "*Social memory* is a set of processes that are not necessarily neatly bound by the dividing lines between different human communities, that within any community are likely to generate a diversity of understandings both of what pasts ought to be evoked or described or celebrated, and of the particular contents that representations or evocations of each of those pasts should incorporate or articulate. *Collective memory* is the species of ideological fiction, itself often generated by and within [the] processes of social memory, which presents particular social entities as the possessors of a stable mnemonic capacity that is collectively exercised, and that presents particular views or representations of a supposedly collective past as the natural expressions of such a collective mnemonic capacity." Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and Memory* (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2007), 18-19. (Italicized words are in original.)

Chapter three examines Canadian's fiction writers' portrayals of the archival profession through depictions of archivist characters, settings in archives, and archival work or research. Since the 1980s, archivists and archival thinkers have paid close attention to how archives are represented in newspapers, documentaries, films, novels, and other works of popular culture, and have written a number of articles and conducted studies on the topic in hopes of identifying positive changes over time.¹⁹ Those studies are employed as context for the conversation in this chapter. There is a gap in archival literature, as no comprehensive study of how images of archives have been depicted in novels written since the beginning of the twenty-first century has been conducted, and no study of the archival image in Canadian novels has ever been considered. This chapter identifies pervasive stereotypes that have shaped the image of archives for decades — including of awkward, easily dismissed characters that are defined only by their profession as archivists, and who do frivolous or mysterious and secretive work in dark and dirty archival spaces. A survey of seven Canadian novels written from 1976-2014 that feature prominent archivist characters was undertaken for this chapter to observe whether those stereotypes are found in Canadian fiction and, if so, whether they have evolved in a positive way over time.

A close reading and analysis of the representations of archives, archivists, archival themes, or details about the archival profession in the novels *Bear* (1976) by

¹⁹ See Barbara L. Craig, "'What the Papers Say': Archives in the English-Language Canadian Public Press, 1899-1994," *Archivaria* 40 (1995): 109-120; Richard J. Cox, "International Perspectives on the Image of Archivists and Archives: Coverage by *The New York Times*, 1992-1993," *The International Information & Library Review* 25, no. 3 (1993): 195-231; Kathleen Epp, "Telling Stories around the 'Electronic Campfire': The Use of Archives in Television Productions," *Archivaria* 49 (Spring 2000): 53-83; Susanne Keen, *Romances of the Archive in Contemporary British Fiction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); Karen Buckley, "'The Truth is in the Red Files'"; Arlene Schmuland, "The Archival Image in Fiction"; Tania Aldred, Gordon Burr and Eun Park, "Crossing a Librarian with a Historian"; Caryn Radick, "'Complete and in Order': Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and the Archival Profession," *The American Archivist* 76, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2013): 502-520.

Marian Engel; *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) by Margaret Atwood; *Burying Ariel* (2000) by Gail Bowen; *Pack up the Moon* (2001) by Richard Teleky; *What Casanova Told Me* (2004) by Susan Swan; *The Search for Heinrich Schlegel* (2014) by Martha Baillie; and *The World Before Us* (2014) by Aislinn Hunter make up the bulk of this chapter. In light of the newly positive ways that Canadian authors have begun to perceive archives, better understand their purpose, and their positive experiences using archival materials (as established in the second chapter of this thesis), my hypothesis upon conducting this survey was that representations of the archival image in Canadian fiction would have become more informed and recognizable to archivists in novels written since the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Chapter three concludes with observations about the unfortunate disconnect that exists between the favourable ways Canadian authors of historical fiction have spoken about archives and archivists and the often contrasting representations of the archival image in works of fiction. There are some signs, however, that representations of archives in Canadian fiction have improved, which bodes well for the future.

Chapter One: Rise of Canadian Literary Archives, 1960-2017

Literary archives began to emerge in Canada in the 1960s, and the collection of records created by the Canadian literary world has thereafter been an important aspect of Canadian archiving as a means of preserving the records and history surrounding Canadian literature. Both archives and literature were slow to develop in Canada. Although both were present in early Canadian culture, it was not until a ‘flowering’ of Canadian culture amid a renewed pursuit of national identity across the second half of the twentieth century that each began to receive increased public appreciation, and attention and funding from the Canadian government. Canadian literary archives are a product of the birth of ‘Can-lit’ in the 1960s, the resulting new value placed on Canadian literary works, and the establishment of an academic field of literary study in the latter half of the twentieth century. Meanwhile, Canadian archives were increasingly interested in collecting significant regional, local, and private records. The newly significant records of the Canadian literary world were amongst those that began to be acquired by archives in the latter half of the twentieth century, and, thus, Canadian literary archives were born.

Early Cultural Initiatives

Shortly after Canadian Confederation in 1867, the government of the new Dominion of Canada was receptive to arguments for the establishment of a public archival repository. It was thought that patriotism and Canadian identity would increase as the history of the new country became better known and was made more easily accessible.¹ In 1871 the Quebec Literary and Historical Society petitioned the federal

¹ Ian E. Wilson, "Shortt and Doughty: The Cultural Role of the Public Archives of Canada, 1904-1935," *The Canadian Archivist* 2, no. 4 (1973): 5.

government that Canadians were “practically debarred” from access to public records, documents, and official papers illustrative of the history and progress of society in Canada, and requested better access. In response to this position, the government set aside a budget for the archives in 1872, and appointed Canada’s first federal archivist, Douglas Brymner.² Brymner’s instructions were to “gather, classify, and make available for researchers, the Canadian records.”³ Brymner is renowned for having prepared a solid foundation for a national Canadian archives, and for having given Canadian archives a lasting vision of its role in the country.⁴ The first federal archivist’s legendary “noble dream” was for the archives to document *all* aspects of Canadian society, without emphasis upon any one area, and to “obtain from all sources, private as well as public, such documents as may throw light on social, commercial, municipal, as well as purely political history.”⁵ As Canadian archives continued to develop — albeit slowly in the decades following 1872 — Brymner’s dream remained alive, and shaped archival thinking in Canada for decades.

Early Canadian literary efforts were not granted the same direct support as early Canadian archives, and writers in Canada’s early years often found that their endeavours were met with indifference.⁶ In the first half of the twentieth century, English-speaking Canadians “grew up with the illusion that there was not then, and never had been a Canadian literature.”⁷ Publications in the early twentieth century consisted mostly of

² Ibid., 5.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 7.

⁵ Ian E. Wilson, “‘A Noble Dream’: The Origins of the Public Archives of Canada,” *Archivaria* 15 (1982-83): 21.

⁶ Vance, 192-193.

⁷ Margaret Atwood, “In Search of *Alias Grace*,” 1508; Atwood points out that she uses the word “illusion” because there had in fact been an early national literature, but her generation growing up in the 1930s and

political, scholarly, historical, or religious writings, and writers attempting to publish poetry or fiction found hostile and indifferent cultural audiences, and very little financial opportunity.⁸ Although some Canadian authors including Ralph Connor, Stephen Leacock, and L.M. Montgomery found success as novelists and sold bestsellers even before the literary boom in Canada, opportunities for Canadian writers and cultural appreciation for literature developed chiefly in the second half of the twentieth century.⁹ Slowly, Canadian writers began to gain respect as Canadian literature made its way into university curricula, as literary history became a topic of some interest, and as nationalists began to wish for a ‘national literature’.¹⁰

The cultural community of Canada had long requested government assistance and national support, but it was not until a heightening of the Canadian public’s national confidence following the Second World War that the country began to pursue a wide variety of publicly funded cultural initiatives.¹¹ Due to the postwar enthusiasm for cultural nationalism, nationalists, academics, and members of the cultural elite concluded that the time was “ripe for a flowering of Canadian culture,” and were convinced that recommendations for the recognition and encouragement of artistic interests would be well received.¹² In the interest of nurturing a national culture, in 1949 the federal Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences — commonly

1940s was not told about it. She says that they were under the “impression there had only ever been one Canadian writer, and that was humorist Stephen Leacock.”

⁸ Canada, Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, *Report* (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, 1951), 225, 227; Vance, 191.

⁹ Vance, 191-194. For a more thorough consideration of the history of Canadian literature, see Reingard M. Nischik, ed., *History of Literature in Canada*. This collaborative text includes a history of Canadian literature written before the ‘coming of age’ of Canadian culture; it includes chapters on ‘Aboriginal Oral Traditions’ and ‘The Whites Arrive: White Writing before Canada, 1000-1600,’ and continues with the histories of both French and English Canadian Literature up until the present day.

¹⁰ Vance, 245, 249.

¹¹ Litt, 16-18.

¹² *Ibid.*, 18.

called the Massey commission — was established. It was to examine cultural endeavours throughout the country and offer a diagnosis of and recommendations for Canada's cultural development.¹³

The Massey Commission was the product of an already emerging cultural concern in Canada following the Second World War.¹⁴ Even so, the commission has long been associated and even credited with the “dawn of a new era in Canadian cultural affairs” in the second half of the twentieth century.¹⁵ The Massey commission report of 1951 advocated for federal funding for universities and the arts. It resulted in the formation of the Canadian Council for the Arts, and recommended changes for Canada's cultural activities in areas including theatre and dance, fine arts and literature, and the Public Archives (as the federal Archives established in 1872 was by then known).¹⁶ Both Canadian archives and Canadian literature were influenced significantly by the Massey commission.

Historians have debated the extent to which the commission actually influenced cultural growth in Canada. Perhaps it would have occurred even without the commission.¹⁷ Regardless of this debate, the creation of the commission attests to Canadian concern about the state of cultural development following the war. Its report is

¹³ Ibid., 3-5, 18-21.

¹⁴ Ibid., 247-248.

¹⁵ Ibid., 3.

¹⁶ Litt, 4; Laura Millar, “Discharging our Debt: The Evolution of the Total Archives Concept in English Canada,” *Archivaria* 46 (1998): 114; Sheffield, 3.

¹⁷ See Maria Tippett, *Making Culture*, 187; Tippett debunks the popular belief that Canadian culture began in the late 1950s by showing the diverse and wide-ranging cultural life that existed in English Canada from the late nineteenth century forward. Although she acknowledges the cultural changes that followed the Massey commission and development of the Canada council, Tippett insists that the country's cultural life in its first five decades must also be recognized.

See also Litt, 5-7, 247-254; Litt acknowledges that the Massey commission has served as a “creationist myth for Canadian cultural nationalists,” the essentials of which are: “before Massey, barbarism; after Massey, civilization and arts subsidies for all.” He makes clear that the purpose of his publication on the commission is to provide context, rather than to write about the myth.

an important source of evidence on the condition of both Canadian archives and literature in the mid-twentieth century and allows some understanding of the extent of their growth in the following decades.

The Massey commission reported that Canadian archives had accomplished valuable work since their beginnings.¹⁸ Under the leadership of Dominion Archivists, Canada's Public Archives had collected both government records and supplementary private records, including historical manuscripts, maps, and a newspaper collection.¹⁹ The archives was commended for the collection of private records, and encouraged to continue collecting historical materials including books, pictures, prints, and museum pieces in addition to public records.

By contrast, the Massey commission reported that the state of the national literature was bleak. The commissioners were forced to ask: "Is it true, then, that we are a people without a literature?"²⁰ In response they received "the unpalatable truth" that "no body of creative writing [reflecting] adequately, or with more than limited insight, the nature of the Canadian people and the historic forces which [had] made them what they are" had yet been written, and that "Canadian literature [had] not yet achieved the status of a 'national literature.'"²¹ Although Canadian literature was not highly regarded by 1951, the commissioners conveyed optimism for the gifted young Canadian writers that they encountered, and recommended that 'help' be found for them.²²

¹⁸ Royal Commission on Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, 111.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 111, 115, 117, 121.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 222.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 222-223.

²² *Ibid.*, 225, 227.

Expansion of Canadian Archives and Literature

The recommendations of the Massey commission helped transform Canadian literature in the 1960s and 1970s and spawn the rapid growth of Canadian archives between the 1960s and 1980s.²³ New monetary prizes and fellowships enabled writers to devote more time to creating serious literary works and helped establish national recognition of Canadian writers. Assistance for publishers in Canada and decreased taxes for authors and book publishers were introduced, as well as greater funding for the Public Archives, existing provincial and regional archival repositories, and the creation of new ones.²⁴ The mid-twentieth century represents a turning point in many areas of Canada's cultural activity, and the maturation of Canadian literature and Canadian archives during this time made possible the emergence of literary archives in Canada in the following decades.

The latter half of the twentieth century brought about a new recognition of Canadian literature.²⁵ Canadian literature's 'coming of age' — which has since been referred to as the CanLit Boom of the 1960s and 1970s — occurred as Canadian literature courses began to be offered in schools, support for writing, research, and publication was established, organizations and unions for authors were formed, and bookstores began to stock books by Canadians — which were then read by Canadians.²⁶ These years saw “the largest single increase in literary publishing in Canadian history,” growing critical discussion and the emergence of an academic field for the study of literature, and a

²³ Sheffield, 3; Litt, 245; “Canadian Archives: Reports and Responses; The Wilson Report, 1980,” *Archivaria* 11 (1980): 12.

²⁴ Royal Commission on Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, 227, 231, 245, 341; Millar, “Discharging our Debt,” 115.

²⁵ W.H. New, *A History of Canadian Literature* (McGill: Queen's University Press, 2003), 203; Sheffield, 4.

²⁶ New, 203-204.

canonization of Canadian literature reflective of nationalist ideals of “Canadianness” of the time.²⁷ The rise of CanLit as a suddenly acclaimed national literature stimulated Canadian academic pursuits in the field of literature and an enthusiasm for collecting the records and materials linked to the newly significant Canadian literary canon.

Canadian archives, too, grew tremendously in the mid-twentieth century, particularly as a result of the addition of university archives across the country. Canadian university archivists did not exist prior to 1960, and by 1966 only about half of the universities in Canada had any sort of archival repository.²⁸ Early university archives typically held only theses and university publications and were often given only minimal attention from university librarians, by whom they were usually overseen.²⁹ In the years that followed, the number of universities with archival repositories and full-time archivists increased.³⁰ University archives became important repositories for collecting and providing access to records of national, regional, local, and institutional (university) significance.

These university archives recognized the cultural and social value, and research significance of the private records of individuals and organizations in addition to official institutional or public records.³¹ University manuscript collections consisted of materials created beyond the university that, with an often-regional focus, preserved detailed

²⁷ Sheffield, 11; Nick Mount and Margaret Atwood, “Interview: Elephants are not Giraffes: A Conversation with Margaret Atwood, More or Less about Northrop Frye,” *University of Toronto Quarterly* 81, no. 1 (2012): 60; Paul Cappon, *In our own House: Social Perspectives on Canadian Literature* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1978), 7; Nischik, introduction to *History of Literature in Canada*, 1; “About,” *Canadian Literature*, accessed March 20, 2017, <http://canlit.ca/about>.

²⁸ See Ian Wilson, “Canadian University Archives,” *Archivaria* 3 (1976/77): 18, for an overview of the establishment and development of university archives in Canada in the 1960s and 1970s.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Donald Baird and the University and College Archives Committee, Association of Canadian Archivists, *Canadian University Archives Survey, 1980* (Vancouver: Simon Fraser University Archives, 1980).

³¹ Wilson, “Canadian University Archives,” 25.

documentation of otherwise overlooked groups or communities, and thus also provided research materials for local communities beyond the university.³² Expanding university, provincial, and other local archival institutions caused the Public Archives to reconsider the roles for national, provincial, and local archives, and to evaluate the significance of records reflecting aspects of scientific, economic, cultural, and social life in Canada.³³ Although the Public Archives had also long included a Manuscript Division, it had focused almost solely on political and military records prior to the 1960s. The archives began to review the concept of national significance at mid-century, given the emergence of collecting by smaller archives across Canada of materials that had once been considered within the national purview of the Public Archives.³⁴

The concept of “total archives” was a popular collecting strategy that developed in the mid-1960s and 1970s in Canada. The idea encouraged acquisition of a wide range of records from both an archives sponsoring institution and private institutions and individuals.³⁵ Although Brymner, the first federal archivist of Canada, had aspired to preserve in archives records reflective of *all* areas of Canadian life for the establishment of a ‘balanced’ record of Canadian history, the Canadian government had not included acquisition of its post-Confederation records in his mandate.³⁶ Brymner’s vision for acquiring historical materials from sources other than Canadian government offices remained a primary archival responsibility in the decades following his term as Archivist,

³² Ibid., 26.

³³ Myron Momryk, “‘National Significance’: The Evolution and Development of Acquisition Strategies in the Manuscript Division, National Archives of Canada,” *Archivaria* 52 (2001): 152.

³⁴ Ibid, 152-153.

³⁵ Millar, “Discharging our Debt,” 103-146.

³⁶ Momryk., 152-153; Terry Cook, “Total Archives,” in *Encyclopedia of Archival Science*, edited by Luciana Duranti and Patricia C. Franks (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 397. While the Archives Branch focused on the nation’s cultural activities, the Records Branch in another department was responsible for post-Confederation government records.

and well into the twentieth century.³⁷ Unfortunately, while enthusiasm for collecting historical material from private sources prevailed, post-Confederation Canadian government records were neglected, as was the management of the multitudes of the other materials that were collected.³⁸ This pattern extended to other Canadian public archives.

In hopes of remedying this, a shift from acquiring privately generated historical materials to prioritizing the care, destruction, and management of government records slowly occurred across the twentieth century.³⁹ Canadian archivist Terry Cook described this as a shift from “a semi-antiquarian enthusiasm for collecting the personal papers of heroic figures of a distant or pioneering past to a more scholarly, systematic, and professional approach for acquiring the records of contemporary society and especially managing effectively those of ... burgeoning governments.”⁴⁰ Dr. W. Kaye Lamb, Dominion Archivist from 1948 to 1969, succeeded in blending the cultural and administrative roles of the Public Archives. Lamb introduced records management strategies for government records, and in an effort to “provide the richest possible range of sources for historians to use,” focussed on a balanced collecting strategy for both official records and personal manuscripts that would provide a historical perspective on the development of Canada reflective of government and private individuals and organizations.⁴¹ It was after Lamb’s direction and the implementation of his “inclusive approach to building an archives” that Canada’s archival strategy began to be called

³⁷ Millar, “Discharging our Debt,” 105; Cook, “Total Archives,” 397; Terry Cook, “An Archival Revolution: W. Kaye Lamb and the Transformation of the Archival Profession,” *Archivaria* 60 (2005): 197.

³⁸ Millar, “Discharging our Debt,” 109.

³⁹ *Ibid.*; 113-115; Wilson, “‘A Noble Dream’,” 34-35.

⁴⁰ Cook, “An Archival Revolution,” 186.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 197; Wilson, “‘A Noble Dream’,” 35.

“total archives” in the 1970s.⁴² During the following decades the Public Archives’ Manuscript Division developed programmes for the acquisition of private papers, and created sections for social and cultural, economic and scientific, and ethnic and multicultural records.⁴³

Meanwhile, financial support and publishing opportunities for talented Canadian writers had increased, the careers of many young writers had launched, literary presses began to spring up across the country, and the Canadian literary world began to create literary manuscripts, reviews, correspondence, copies of final publications, and other records pertaining to the business or finances surrounding the creation of Canadian literature. Canadian literature, and with it, the academic field of Canadian literary studies, had ‘come of age,’ and the records created by the Canadian literary world were deemed “an invaluable resource for the scholarly study of Canadian literature” — a statement made in 1993 by Dr. Richard Bennett, University Archivist at the University of Manitoba Department of Archives & Special Collections, and echoed by archives across the country.⁴⁴ Following the Canadian literary boom of the 1960s, it became a primary objective for archives to collect the materials of literary figures, publishers, journals, and presses, and to make them accessible to researchers — who were increasingly interested in having access to the materials created by the literary world.

⁴² Cook, “An Archival Revolution,” 197; Millar, “Discharging our Debt,” 117.

⁴³ “This was known as SNAP, Systematic National Acquisition Programme.” Momryk, 153; Michael D. Swift, “The Canadian Archival Scene in the 1970s: Current Developments and Trends,” *Archivaria* 15 (1982-83): 48.

⁴⁴ University of Manitoba Department of Archives & Special Collections (hereafter UMA), unprocessed archives of the Archives, accession A97-59, box 3, SSHRC Proposal by Dr. Richard E. Bennett, 1993; Paul Hjartarson, “The Importance of the Frederick Philip Grove Collection,” *Proceedings of the First Annual Archives Symposium* (1979): 20.

Literary Archives Emerge

In the late 1950s, the Public Archives of Canada expressed interest in pursuing more records of Canadian literary figures.⁴⁵ As early as 1963, the University of Toronto began to accession literary materials including correspondence, manuscripts, and transcripts written by Canadian novelists Mazo de la Roche and Hugh MacLennan, followed by an acquisition of manuscript materials by Canadian poets Leonard Cohen and Gwendolyn MacEwan in 1964.⁴⁶ In 1960 the University of Manitoba purchased the records of Canadian author Frederick Philip Grove — although they were stored, unprocessed and uncatalogued in locked filing cabinets until the formation of the archives almost two decades later.⁴⁷ Queen’s University Archives also collected a number of literary records throughout the 1960s and, by the end of the decade, had acquired a significant collection of the private papers of a variety of journalists, writers and poets, including editor and poet Blanche Hume, novelist and poet George Bowering, novelist Hugh Garner, and poet Dorothy Livesay.⁴⁸ In 1970 the manuscripts, papers, and correspondence of Louis Arthur Cunningham, a Saint John novelist and short story writer, were acquired and added to the Literary Manuscript Section of the University of New Brunswick: Archives & Special Collections Department.⁴⁹ The early 1970s saw an increase in literary collections at the Public Archives of Canada with the acquisition of the papers of Canadian novelists, Stephen Leacock and Frank L. Packard.⁵⁰ In 1971 the

⁴⁵ Public Archives, *Report on the Public Archives for the Years 1955-1958*, (Ottawa: The Queen’s Printer and Controller of Stationary, 1959), 39.

⁴⁶ Sandra Guillaume, “Minutes of the Archives Section Business Meeting for 1963,” *The Canadian Archivist Newsletter* (1964): 13; Editor, “News in Brief,” *The Canadian Archivist* (1965): 27.

⁴⁷ UMA, SSHRC Proposal by Dr. Richard E. Bennett.

⁴⁸ Editor, “News in Brief,” *The Canadian Archivist* (1969): 76; Editor, “News in Brief,” *The Canadian Archivist* (1972): 79.

⁴⁹ Editor, “News in Brief,” *The Canadian Archivist* (1971): 74

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 76, 78.

University of New Brunswick acquired the records of Canadian novelist Theodore Goodridge Roberts as well as “seventeen tapes and transcripts made from interviews with Canadian novelists and poets.”⁵¹ In the first decade of new attention bestowed upon Canadian literary writing, archivists began to include mention of the records of authors, literary societies, and editors in annual reports on collections acquired.

It is noteworthy that literary records acquired during the early years of the emerging literary archives phenomenon are records of Canadian authors and novelists who had been writing *before* the ‘birth of CanLit’ in the 1960s. This pattern indicates that Canada lacked appreciation for its own literature, rather than lacked talented authors before the second half of the twentieth century. New enthusiasm for a national literature sparked the realization that the records of Canadian authors of the past held historical value and should be preserved, highlighted, and made accessible.

The popularity of collecting literary papers took off in the 1970s as archives continued to collect the records created by Canadian authors, literary and theatrical societies, literary critics and editors, poets, playwrights, and publishers, with vigour. The University of Toronto Department of Rare Books & Manuscripts reported in 1971 that it made extensive additions to its collection of Canadian literary manuscripts, including the papers of Ernest Buckler, Margaret Atwood, and Joseph Rosenblatt.⁵² Mount Allison University Archives acquired the records of Nathan Cohen, Canadian theatre critic in 1972, and the Saskatchewan Archives acquired the manuscript poems of Mrs. Edna Jaques in 1973.⁵³ In 1974 the Public Archives of Canada reported that it had acquired the

⁵¹ Editor, “News in Brief,” *The Canadian Archivist* (1972): 69.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 82.

⁵³ Editor, “News in Brief,” *The Canadian Archivist* (1973): 80; Editor, “Archives Report,” *The Canadian Archivist* (1974): 132.

records of Canadian poet and novelist John Glassco and playwright Joseph Schull.⁵⁴ The University of British Columbia Library Special Collections Division collected the records and papers of a Vancouver-based literary society called the Vagabond Club, and the University of New Brunswick Manuscript Collections reported new accessions of Cid Corman's correspondence with Canadian poets, two manuscript volumes of poetry by Raymond Souster, and correspondence between editor and journalist Rudyard Kipling and poet Francis Sherman.⁵⁵ The Christie Harris fonds was acquired in 1975 by the Chief Librarian of the University of Calgary — who was eager to add the papers of an important female writer to the already growing collection of Canadian authors' manuscripts in Special Collections.⁵⁶ Listed above is only a selection of the most notable literary acquisitions across the country in the early 1970s. They indicate the variety of literary records that was considered of archival value, and the increasing rate at which literary materials were pursued by archives.

As literary collecting flourished, Canadian archivists began to engage in conversations about the appraisal of literary collections, how to best encourage authors to keep their records for posterity, and how archivists might best pursue the materials of significant authors.⁵⁷ The appearance of articles as early as 1975 and the early 1980s that addressed these issues in *Archivaria*, the journal of the Association of Canadian Archivists, reveals the growing involvement of the Canadian archival and literary world in the phenomenon of collecting literary materials in archives at this time. These articles

⁵⁴ Editor, "Archives Report," *The Canadian Archivist* (1974): 112.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 127, 132-145.

⁵⁶ Marlys Chevrefils and Apollonia Steele, *The Christie Harris Papers: An Inventory of the Archive at the University of Calgary Library* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2000), XLIII.

⁵⁷ See R.J. Taylor, "Field Appraisal of Manuscript Collections," *Archivaria* 2 (1976): 44-48. Taylor discusses aspects of appraising manuscript collections, including those belonging to literary figures that may include materials relating to their subjects' public, religious, personal and/or literary lives.

are also primary sources for understanding the development of patterns and rules for literary collecting. A notable example is Canadian archivist Jean Tener and educator and academic Robin Skelton's discussion in 1984 of the acquisition of literary archives and the particular role that archivists must play.⁵⁸

Unlike in the early days of literary collecting, when the records of *already* established Canadian authors were pursued for their archival value, archivists in the 1980s had begun to *anticipate* the creation of literary records with future archival value by authors with the potential to attain wide significance. In his article, Skelton focused on how to provide authors with an understanding of how valuable their records could be and how to best keep records such as drafts, reviews, proofs and correspondence for future donation to archives.⁵⁹ Skelton explained that specific records — such as drafts or reviews of authors' works before publication, or personal correspondence — can be particularly valuable, as these records allow researchers a glimpse into the writing processes and personal lives of authors.⁶⁰ Skelton's primary concern was that archivists might wait until after authors have turned 'senile' to attempt to acquire a comprehensive archive, and might thus have greater difficulty in obtaining these records. His advice was that archivists should begin to pursue the records of individuals "as soon as it becomes clear that [the] writer has some standing" so as to ensure that no valuable records can be lost or destroyed.⁶¹

Tener criticized Skelton for prematurely pursuing the records of authors, indicating that chasing after letters and other records associated with an author "demonstrates an

⁵⁸ Robin Skelton, "The Acquisition of Literary Archives," *Archivaria* 18 (1984): 214-219; Jean Tener, "Problems of Literary Archives: A Commentary," *Archivaria* 18 (1984): 228-231.

⁵⁹ Skelton, 214-215.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 216.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 219.

alarming lack of awareness of the integrity of a literary archive.”⁶² Tener also defended the private lives of authors, signifying that although authors’ vocation makes them public figures, it does not entitle the public to invade every corner of their lives, or the lives of their friends and families, as soon as a repository receives their papers; she declared that “the world of literary scholarship need not collapse because we wait a few years in order to allow contemporary authors some kind of personal privacy.”⁶³ Tener concluded by reminding archivists of the obligation to ensure that archival activities do not subvert the writer’s first task, which is to create literature, not archives.⁶⁴

Tener and Skelton point to the important — and still relevant — dilemma of simultaneously allowing authors to create records organically and through their own writing processes, and ensuring that they save their records for future donations to archival repositories. This discussion has pervaded the decades of literary collecting: the discussion between Skelton and Tener is only one of many studies, commentaries, or reviews that have been published in the years since literary collecting began, that make suggestions for the collection of literary materials by archivists.⁶⁵

As well as recognizing the value of, and pursuing, the records produced by the Canadian literary world, archivists realized early on the importance of making these records accessible to researchers. In the latter decades of the twentieth century it became an important project for archival institutions across the country to put together guides and

⁶² Tener, “Problems of Literary Archives,” 229.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 230.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁶⁵ Sue McKemmish, “Evidence of Me,” *The Australian Library Journal* 45, no. 3 (1996): 174-187; Laura Millar, *The Story Behind the Book: Preserving Authors’ and Publishers’ Archives* (Vancouver: Canadian Centre for Studies in Publishing Press, 2009); Catherine Hobbs, “Personal Ethics: Being an Archivist of Writers,” *Basements and Attics, Closets and Cyberspace: Explorations in Canadian Women’s Archives*, eds. Linda M. Morra, and Jessica Schagerl (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2012), 181-192; Douglas, “The Archiving ‘I,’” 53-89.

inventories whereby researchers would be able to scan the materials of a collection from a single point, and thus quickly become aware of the extent and potential research value of various collections.⁶⁶ The first of these projects is oft-cited as an indication that the Public Archives had begun to place more emphasis upon its Manuscript Division and the collections of manuscript materials across the country. The *Union List of Manuscripts* began as a project in 1961 under the directorship of W. Kaye Lamb, with funding and support from the Canadian Historical Association. The project sought to list and briefly describe the collections of each of the 110 archival repositories across the country at this time. Updated and continuously produced in the following years, the *Union List of Manuscripts* was called “by far the most comprehensive list of manuscripts and records in Canadian archival and related institutions” and “an indispensable research tool.”⁶⁷ The completion and success of this project, its continuing publication, and productions of similar directories of archival institutions in following years, exemplify the support of the government in the Public Archives’ early efforts to collect materials beyond federal or public records, and to make these records accessible for the study of Canadian history.⁶⁸

Further, the reports *To Know Ourselves: The Report of the Commission on Canadian Studies* and *Canadian Archives: Report to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada* — more commonly referred to as the Symons report and the Wilson report — were published in 1975 and 1980, respectively, and were instrumental for

⁶⁶ Robert S. Gordon and Public Archives of Canada, *Union List of Manuscripts in Canadian Repositories. Catalogue Collectif des Manuscrits des Archives Canadiennes* (Ottawa: Queens Printer, 1968): i.

⁶⁷ Paul M. Migus, Review of *Union List of Manuscripts in Canadian Repositories. Catalogue Collectif des Manuscrits des Archives Canadiennes*, by Robert S. Gordon and Public Archives of Canada, *Archivaria* 3 (1977): 138-139.

⁶⁸ See further examples: Association of Canadian Archivists, *Directory of Canadian Records and Manuscript Repositories* (Ottawa: Bonanza Press, 1977); Archives Section of the Canadian Historical Association, *The Directory of Canadian Archival Repositories* (Ottawa: Canadian Council of Archives, 1971).

Canadian archives in the later twentieth century.⁶⁹ While both reports examined larger issues than archives, each made important recommendations for Canadian and, often specifically, university archives. Some of these recommendations included initiatives for promoting public awareness of the value of private archival materials, the continued preparation of guides to all known archival resources in Canada under the leadership of the Public Archives and in co-operation with other federal, provincial, and private archives, and that funding be made available for these projects by both federal and provincial governments.⁷⁰ The Wilson report's recommendations were particularly significant for creating funding opportunities for archives in Canada through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).⁷¹ The Symons and Wilson reports have been called 'landmarks' for Canadian archives, and resulted in the publication of research tools for archival materials, and support and funding for these projects.⁷²

In addition to national or institutional guides of archival resources, inventories for select collections were also produced in order to increase ease of access to particular records. Many subject guides were created for literary collections, and these pointed researchers towards the often-unknown extent of literary collections that were held by

⁶⁹ T.H.B. Symons, James E. Page, Commission on Canadian Studies, and Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. *To Know Ourselves: the Report of the Commission on Canadian Studies* (Ottawa: Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 1975); Consultative Group on Canadian Archives, *Canadian Archives: Report to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada*. (Ottawa: Information Division of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 1980).

⁷⁰ "Canadian Archives: Reports and Responses; The Symons Report, 1975," *Archivaria* 11 (1980): 3; Recommendations 1 & 2.

⁷¹ "Canadian Archives: Reports and Responses; The Wilson Report, 1980," 12-35.

⁷² "Canadian Archives: Reports and Responses; The Symons Report, 1975," 11.

archives.⁷³ Many guides to literary collections were produced with assistance from the SSHRCC's Canadian Studies - Research Tools Program, and with great care and attention to the descriptive standards developed in Canadian archives.⁷⁴ The guides to literary collections published in the latter decades of the twentieth century are evidence of archival repositories that emphasized literary collections as an important part of their holdings, and the efforts that archival institutions made to highlight and make accessible their literary materials for researchers. The Public Archives of Canada, Queen's University Archives, the University of Calgary Special Collections Department, and the University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections are examples of Canadian archival institutions that began to prioritize literary collecting during the Canadian literary boom. They made significant efforts to provide access and give prominence to their literary holdings, and continue to acquire literary records as a part of their mandates.⁷⁵

Early Leaders in Literary Collecting

The Public Archives of Canada (later called the National Archives of Canada) recognized literary records as important for reflecting Canadian life and culture even before the Canadian literary boom. In its annual report for the years 1955-1958, the

⁷³ Debra Barr, (Project Archivist), *Guide to the Canadian Manuscript Collections in Victoria University Library* (Toronto: Victoria University Library, 1988); Anne Maclean, Review of *Literary Archives Guide* by National Archives of Canada, *Archivaria* 29 (1989-90): 255.

⁷⁴ David Enns, Review of *Guide to the Canadian Manuscript Collections in Victoria University Library* by Debra Barr, Project Archivist, *Archivaria* 29 (1989-90): 256; Maclean, 256; Charles R. Steele, Series Introduction in *The Hugh MacLennan Papers: An Inventory of the Archive at the University of Calgary Libraries*, (Calgary, University of Calgary Press, 1986); Steele indicated that the lack of research tools such as indexes, inventories, and biographical information about authors frustrated scholars and inhibited the research that could be undertaken using the rich materials in archives across the country, and that a program like the Canadian Studies — Research Tools Program was necessary to remedy this problem. The Canadian Archival Inventories Series at the University of Calgary aimed to provide research documentation of its records and hoped to “stimulate scholars to undertake the kinds of elementary investigation that [had] long been needed in Canadian Studies,” v.

⁷⁵ “Mission and Mandate” University of Manitoba Libraries, accessed June 19, 2016. <http://umanitoba.ca/libraries/units/archives/mandate.html>.

Public Archives listed Literature and Art as fields in which it had not yet acquired many important collections, and expressed its intention to “expand [those] holdings rapidly in the near future.”⁷⁶ Early “important” literary collections included the papers of French-Canadian poet Louis Fréchette (1839-1908), the records of novelist and colonizer John Galt (1779-1839), and the Montgomery-Weber Letters, which include letters written by L.M. Montgomery over the period 1905-1941.⁷⁷ In 1987 the National Archives of Canada produced the *Literary Archives Guide* to introduce and briefly describe the Manuscript Division’s by then extensive major literary holdings.⁷⁸ These included papers relating to poets, novelists, playwrights, scriptwriters, journalists, editors, scholars, publishers, and writers of short stories, science fiction, adventure stories and children stories, and the records of literary organizations and associations, all acquired in the post-Confederation period before 1987.⁷⁹ The *Guide* served to indicate to researchers “how wide-reaching and diverse the Manuscript Division’s holdings [were], and how rich and multi-faceted Canadian literature [had] become.”⁸⁰ Literary collecting has remained a priority of the federal archives — now called Library and Archives Canada (LAC). LAC collects the archival fonds of Canadian writers and other individuals and organizations in fields related to literature, with emphasis on records about the creators and creation of works of Canadian literature.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Public Archives, *Report on the Public Archives for the Years 1955-1958*, 39.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 39-40.

⁷⁸ National Archives of Canada, *Literary Archives Guide* (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1988).

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸⁰ Maclean, Review of *Literary Archives Guide* by National Archives of Canada, 255.

⁸¹ “Literary Archives: A Guide to the Literary Fonds,” Library and Archives Canada, accessed May 21, 2017. <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/archives-literary/Pages/literary-archives.aspx>.

Literary records quickly became one of Queen's University Archives four major acquisition areas.⁸² As well as acquiring significant records, Queen's also began to complete finding aids for its ever-growing literary collections.⁸³ In 1982, the archives received a \$75,000 grant from the SSHRCC to create a database for its holdings of Canadian literary papers, which included those of Lorne Pierce, A1 Purdy, Ralph Gustafson, Hugh Garner, Bliss Carman, and many other writers.⁸⁴ In a report on the Queen's 'Canlit Project,' Anne MacDermaid and Robyn Zuck commented that at this time "access to Canadian Literary papers [was] still a manual, time-consuming, and repetitive task for both scholar and archivist," noting that establishing a database would decrease search time and provide more complete access to literary materials.⁸⁵ The current website for the Queen's University Archives boasts that the repository holds one of the largest collections of literary papers in Canada, that item-level descriptions exist for many of its collections, and that they are available through the archives' database.⁸⁶

The Special Collections Department of the University of Calgary Library began collecting the papers of Canadian literary figures well before the appointment of its first university archivist, Jean Tener, in 1984.⁸⁷ By the mid-1980s, "researcher interest in the University of Calgary literary archives" had generated an "immediate need for information" on those records.⁸⁸ As early as 1986, a project titled "An Inventory of the

⁸² Editor, "News in Brief," *The Canadian Archivist* (1972): 79.

⁸³ Editor, "News in Brief," *The Canadian Archivist* (1973): 76-77.

⁸⁴ Anne MacDermaid and Robyn Zuck, "Notes and Communications: Canlit Project, Queen's University Archives" *Archivaria* 16 (1983): 178.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁸⁶ Queens University, "Private Manuscripts: Literary Papers," Queen's University Archives, accessed March 27, 2017, <http://archives.queensu.ca/search-our-collections/private-manuscripts#lit>.

⁸⁷ Jean Dryden and Apollonia Steele, "Obituary: Jean Tener, 1931-2016," *Archivaria* 82 (Fall 2016): 196.

⁸⁸ Jean F. Tener, Archival Introduction to *The Rudy Wiebe Papers, First Accession: An Inventory of the Archive at the University of Calgary Libraries*, prepared by Jean F. Tener, Sandra Morensen, Marlys Chevrefils, and Apollonia Steele, (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1986), XXX.

Archive at the University of Calgary Libraries” was undertaken with the support of the SSHRCC Research Tools Program in order to prepare and publish descriptive inventories of archival collections.⁸⁹ Tener noted in the introduction to the series: “The absence of such finding aids hampers both researchers and reference staff in their efforts to locate specific items, particularly in extensive collections,” and thus, “archives are seen as sources of frustration almost as often as they are sources of information.”⁹⁰ Tener described the University of Calgary’s archival inventory series as “an attempt to remedy this situation for its Canadian literary archives.”⁹¹ Inventories were created for the papers of many significant Canadian literary figures as a part of the Inventory series. Although the archival descriptions for literary collections now exist online, reference is made to the significant published inventories created before.⁹² The Special Collections Department at the University of Calgary was an early leader in the collection of Canadian literary archives and the now-called University of Calgary Archives and Special Collections remains so today.

The University of Manitoba Department of Archives & Special Collections (UMA) became renowned as a leading centre for the study of primary documentation for Western Canadian and Prairie Literature under the leadership of Dr. Richard Bennett, appointed

⁸⁹ Acknowledgements in *The Rudy Wiebe Papers, First Accession: An Inventory of the Archive at the University of Calgary Libraries*, prepared by Jean F. Tener, Sandra Morensen, Marlys Chevrefils, and Apollonia Steele. (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1986), VI; Acknowledgements in *The Joanna M. Glass Papers: An Inventory of the Archive at the University of Calgary Libraries* prepared by Jean M. Moore, Jean Tener & Apollonia Steele, (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1986): VI.

⁹⁰ Tener, “Archival Introduction,” XXVII.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Marlys Chevrefils and Apollonia Steele, *The Christie Harris Papers*; University of Calgary, “Canadian Literary and Art Archives,” Archives and Special Collections, accessed March 24, 2017, <http://asc.ucalgary.ca/collections/archival/literary>.

first archivist of the UMA in 1978.⁹³ Following the acquisition of the Frederick Phillip Grove records in 1960, the UMA collected the records of many Canadian writers, poets, critics, editors and presses, some of which include those of authors Dorothy Livesay, Eli Mandel and the Reverend Charles W. Gordon (Ralph Connor), and the records of the Turnstone and Thistledown presses — both of which encouraged and specialized in poetry and fiction in Western Canada.⁹⁴ Many grant applications were proposed for the production of extensive finding aids and guides for literary collections at the UMA, and funding was received from the SSHRCC for the publication of *The Papers of Dorothy Livesay: A Research Tool* in 1986 and *For God, King, Pen & Country: Papers of Charles William Gordon (1860-1937) (Ralph Connor)* in 1990.⁹⁵ As a result of the UMA's continued acquisition of notable prairie literary figures' papers throughout the latter decades of the twentieth century and the publication of finding aids for these collections, the university archives' claim as a literary research centre increased significantly and attracted scholars.⁹⁶ Prairie literature remains one of UMA's chief collecting areas, as is apparent on its current website where the descriptions of literary collections are made accessible online.⁹⁷

⁹³ Department of Archives and Special Collections, University of Manitoba Libraries, "Canadian Prairie Literary Manuscripts," Pamphlet, 1994; Department of Archives and Special Collections, University of Manitoba Libraries, Introduction to *A Guide to the Major Holdings of the Department of Archives and Special Collections, The University of Manitoba Libraries*, compiled by Richard E. Bennett, Michael G. Moosberger, Geraldine Alton Harris, and Paul Panchyshyn (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Libraries, 1993).

⁹⁴ SSHRC Proposal by Dr. Richard E. Bennett, UMA.

⁹⁵ Department of Archives and Special Collections, University of Manitoba Libraries, *The Papers of Dorothy Livesay: A Research Tool* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 1986); Maura Taylor Pennington, Susan Bellay, and Department of Archives and Special Collections, University of Manitoba Libraries, *For God, King, Pen and Country: The Papers of Charles William Gordon (1860-1937) (Ralph Connor): A Research Tool* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 1990).

⁹⁶ UMA, SSHRC Proposal by Dr. Richard E. Bennett; "Canadian Prairie Literary Manuscripts," Pamphlet, 1994.

⁹⁷ University of Manitoba, "Prairie Literature Collections," University of Manitoba Libraries, accessed March 27, 2017. http://umanitoba.ca/libraries/units/archives/collections/subject/prairie_lit/index.html.

Alongside the early literary collecting initiatives of the National Archives of Canada, the University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections, University of Calgary Archives and Special Collections, and Queen’s University Archives exemplify the emergence of the literary archives phenomenon in Canada. These institutions began to collect the records of important Canadian authors in the 1960s or even earlier. They pursued literary records throughout the remaining decades of the twentieth century, undertook projects to increase ease of accessibility to these materials and continue today to collect and promote the records created by the Canadian literary world. University archives, driven by the research demands of academic departments, were and continue to be “amongst the most active collectors of literary papers to support research in book history, publishing studies, and literary criticism.”⁹⁸ Along with Library and Archives Canada — which holds over 200 literary collections — university archives and libraries across Canada hold impressive collections of the records of Canadian literary publishers and presses, authors, poets, playwrights and journalists.⁹⁹

Current Themes in Literary Collecting

The records created alongside works of literature, including drafts and notes, authors’ personal records, correspondence with publishers, and other documentation of authors’ professional lives have been recognized as reflections of their creators, context for their lives, writing and creative processes, and intentions, and as a historical record of the larger publishing and literary world.¹⁰⁰ Authors and publishers are now urged to carefully keep their records for future donations, and literary records — specifically the personal

⁹⁸ Millar, *The Story Behind the Book*, 92-93.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 19-20, 92-99.

¹⁰⁰ Hobbs, “New Approaches to Canadian Literary Archives,” 109-110, 113; Hobbs, “Personal Ethics,” 184; Dever, Newman, and Vickery, 98; Douglas and MacNeil, 28, 33.

records of authors — have become an important topic in the archival world for demonstrating the importance of personal records, and discussing how those records should be acquired, conceptualized, treated, and understood by archivists.¹⁰¹

Authors and archivists both play an influential role in the determination of which records are acquired and contribute to the content of literary archives and the recorded history of the literary world. Authors, of course, create their own records and choose whether to leave them to archives, a decision that may be influenced by a number of motives, including, but not limited to, the desire to improve their literary reputations, unwillingness to compromise their own privacy and allow researchers into their personal lives, or concerns about the legal rights to their intellectual property.¹⁰² Authors have been known to destroy or cull materials from their archives, to self-edit as records are created in awareness of a future audience, or to fail to preserve materials for donation to archives at all.¹⁰³ These “editorial impulse(s),” as well as restrictions that authors might place upon archival records, concerns about copyright, and other “considerations relating to authorial control” that cause authors to hesitate when donating their records “play a

¹⁰¹ Millar, *The Story Behind the Book*; McKemmish, 184; Douglas, “The Archiving ‘I,’” 56; Hobbs, “The Character of Personal Archives,” 126. Note: The following overview of current themes surrounding literary archives is not a close examination of literary archives today. Literary archives have been discussed extensively in academic literature in recent years, and the articles cited in this chapter should be considered for a more thorough overview. Note also: writers’ archives have been written about and explored extensively alongside the topic of personal archives in academic and archival studies literature in recent years. Canadian Archivist and graduate of the Joint Master’s Program in History (Archival Studies) at the Universities of Manitoba and Winnipeg, Jordan Bass, wrote a valuable master’s thesis documenting archival theories, attitudes, and practices surrounding personal records, with special focus on digitally created personal records and strategies for preserving those records. See Jordan Leslie Bass, “Getting Personal: Confronting the Challenges of Archiving Personal Records in the Digital Age,” (Master’s thesis, University of Manitoba, 2012).

¹⁰² Robert McGill, “Biographical Desire and the Archives of Living Authors,” *Auto/Biography Studies* 24, no. 1 (2009): 129; Douglas and MacNeil, 25-39; Hobbs, “New Approaches to Canadian Literary Archives,” 111; Dever, Newman and Vickary, 111-110.

¹⁰³ Hobbs, “New Approaches to Canadian Literary Archives,” 110-111; Douglas and MacNeil, 25-39.

determining role in the accessibility and even the content of literary archives.”¹⁰⁴ By culling their records, authors reduce transparency and intimacy from their records, and audiences of those records are only able to get to know authors, or further interpret their work, through allowances that authors make and aspects of personal life they intentionally keep within their records.¹⁰⁵

Archivists, too, play an active role in the creation of literary archives, and their role in appraising, describing, arranging, and interpreting literary archives affects the way those records appear for researchers.¹⁰⁶ Catherine Hobbs, a literary records archivist at Library and Archives Canada and leading archival scholar in this area, notes:

The positions of the archivist are as follows: *interlocutor* about the archives with the creator, when the archivist makes contact with and then visits the creator; *first stage interpreter*, when the archivist identifies and describes documents in finding aids; and in some sense, *preliminary biographer*, when the archivist distills the facts of a person’s life and circumstances in order to interpret the documents.¹⁰⁷

Archivists’ appraisal choices, which are based on mandates, policies, and professional judgement, inevitably “shape the record or the archival fonds;” these choices influence the canonization of Canadian literature through the appraisal of the records of some Canadian authors for preservation and posterity, rather than others.¹⁰⁸ A number of archival thinkers and scholars have pointed out that archivists’ appraisal choices influence the literary reputations and values of authors and their works, and have raised

¹⁰⁴ Hobbs, “New Approaches to Canadian Literary Archives,” 111.

¹⁰⁵ Douglas, “The Archiving ‘I,’” 53-89; Douglas explored the records of a selection of eight American and Canadian writers’ and wrote about the intentions of writers in shaping their records before donating them; she cautions archivists to consider the skewed readings or interpretations of writers’ archives that may result from their partial nature; Douglas and MacNeil, 26-39.

¹⁰⁶ Hobbs, “Personal Ethics,” 185.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 182.

¹⁰⁸ Jan Horner and David Darby, “The Role of Libraries and Archives in Canon Formation and Establishing Literary Value: A Point of View from the English-Speaking World,” 2013, accessed March 27, 2017, <http://hdl.handle.net/1993/19063>; Jennifer Douglas, “Original Order in Writers’ Archives,” *Archivaria* 76 (2013): 7-25.

questions about whether archives should be responsible for selecting records to document “the lives and careers of unsuccessful and unknown writers, alongside the literary giants.”¹⁰⁹ Archivists also interpret the meaning of writers’ archives by arranging, removing, and describing personal records, and a number of articles have been written to display that decisions made by archivists about how to represent the documents of writers “have an impact on the way they will be interpreted and on a researcher’s sense of the nature of the materials.”¹¹⁰ In response to the actions of both authors and archivists in shaping the contents and meanings that may be found in the archives of writers, researchers and archival thinkers have contemplated how authors’ self-editing or intentions when donating their records, or archivists’ appraisal, description, arrangement, and interpretation of literary records, have altered how those records might be interpreted, how much truth of meaning has been culled throughout the process, and how the overall history of Canadian literature is, and has been, affected by archival selection.¹¹¹

Meanwhile, Catherine Hobbs has argued that the future of Canadian literary archives is bright as a result of the increasingly close relationships that archivists have with writers, archivists’ knowledge of the literary world, and archivists’ improving understanding of how to deal with personal records. Hobbs acknowledges that archivists “perform a vital function in archival creation.”¹¹² She points out that practices such as culling or destroying records are less common, as archivists are increasingly involved in

¹⁰⁹ Kathleen E. Garay and Christi Verduyn, “‘Turning the Knobs on Writers’ Closets’: Archives and Canadian Literature in the 21st Century,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 40.2 (2006): 11; Horner and Darby, 1-2; Amy Tector, “The Almost Accidental Archive and its Impact on Literary Subjects and Canonicity,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 4.2 (2006): 96-108.

¹¹⁰ Douglas, “The Archiving ‘I,’” 83, 88; Douglas and MacNeil, 26-39; Douglas, “Original Order in Writers’ Archives,” 25; Tector, “The Almost Accidental Archive,” 96-107.

¹¹¹ Ian Hamilton, *Keepers of the Flame: Literary Estates and the Rise of Biography* (London: Hutchinson, 1992), 25; Garay and Verduyn, 12; Douglas, “The Archiving ‘I,’” 87-88.

¹¹² Hobbs, “New Approaches to Canadian Literary Archives,” 112.

the acquisition of writers' records, and through "open communication with writers about their documents and in understanding their concerns...archivists can arrive at specific and reasonable restrictions that properly protect but also allow access."¹¹³ In reference to concerns about archival influence over the literary canon, Hobbs points out that "archivists have a responsibility not to simply follow literary scholarship, but to also map developments more widely, seeing and predicting the effects of the ever-changing literary scene on writers." She argues that archivists "should pursue a broad range of material in order to render the full dynamics of the literary scene, its archival record, and the scholarly analysis of that record" to ensure a balanced record of literature for the future.¹¹⁴ Hobbs also suggests that archivists, through an involved and creative approach to archival description and interpretation, might "promote a more thorough understanding of the varied and complex components of the writing life as it is revealed in Canadian literary archives."¹¹⁵ Hobbs points to the possibility of a more complete literary archival record that reflects the "wide scope of Canadian literary culture" through archivists' "expanded roles in acquisition, appraisal, and description" in the future.¹¹⁶

Literary archives — both the personal records of writers, as well as the records of publishers or other records created as part of the literary world — have been an important focus for many Canadian archival institutions since their emergence in the middle of the twentieth century, and the literary collections of many archival institutions across the country remain important today. Although collecting priorities have evolved over the years, Canadian authors continue to donate their records to archives. Archives are still in

¹¹³ Ibid., 111.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 112.

¹¹⁵ Hobbs, "Personal Ethics," 187-189; Hobbs, "New Approaches to Canadian Literary Archives," 117.

¹¹⁶ Hobbs, "New Approaches to Canadian Literary Archives," 117.

pursuit of the papers of publishers and locally and nationally significant writers.¹¹⁷

Literary archives continue to be a subject of conversation in the archival world as archivists, scholars, and researchers discuss the best ways to acquire, appraise, describe, and provide access to the literary papers. And the roles of Canadian archives and archivists remain important for the preservation and provision of access to the records that contribute to the history and study of the now widely read and internationally recognized Canadian literary world.

¹¹⁷ Millar, *The Story Behind the Book*, 19.

Chapter Two: Using Archives to Write Canadian Historical Fiction

Canadian literature is now highly acclaimed. Since the Canadian literary boom that occurred in the second half of the twentieth century, Canadian authors have come to the fore and have produced literary works of great merit. Indeed, Canadian authors including Margaret Atwood, Michael Ondaatje, Lawrence Hill, Frances Itani and Ami McKay — and many others — have achieved international renown. There is no longer a question of whether Canada may boast of great authors and a national literature. Yet, absent amid the praises of Canadian authors and their literary achievements is an acknowledgement of the wide and expanding role that archives play in the creation of Canadian literary works. *Many* Canadian authors including novelists, poets, playwrights, and literary historians, use archival materials as sources of inspiration or factual information. Canadian historical fiction, in particular, is imbued with characters, plot lines, and evidence for stories ‘based on true events’ that were found in archival records.

Many novelists and playwrights who have used archival materials readily discuss these sources of inspiration and/or how their research was conducted. They often mention archives or praise archivists in the Acknowledgements sections of their publications. However, few reviewers delve into the archival backgrounds of historical novels or plays. Few articles detailing the uses of archives by authors of fiction have been published, and the phenomenon of literary and archival intersection often remains invisible to readers of novels influenced by archives. The aim of this chapter is to delve into the many ways Canadian authors of historical fiction use archives, to show the now abundant examples of Canadian authors who have spoken about their uses of archives publicly and how this pattern affects archives in a positive way. The chapter also aims to demonstrate that

authors' uses of historical information from archives may have an impact on societal understanding and remembrance of history.

Historical fiction, although it does not necessarily accurately represent history, affects its readers' understanding and memory of historical events. Margaret Atwood, in a public lecture on writing Canadian historical fiction in 1996, explained simply that "all novels are in a sense 'historical' novels; they can't help it, insofar as they have to, they *must* make reference to a time that is not the time in which the reader is reading the book."¹ While insisting that novels must be historical, Atwood problematized the memories of characters within the plot of a novel, of readers of a novel, of the individuals who write of historical events, and the collective memory of society. Atwood declared that all are unreliable, but that "there can be no history, and no novel either, without memory of some sort."² Historical fiction is imbued with memory of the past, and audiences of novels, plays, or films that portray historical events, times, places, or individuals are affected by, engage with, and remember aspects of history that may otherwise have been forgotten or left unknown. Authors of historical fiction who include details and memories found in archives, especially, may include elusive tidbits of the past, and thus bring forgotten histories back for the remembrance of society. Tom Nesmith has pointed out that, "given that novels are much more widely read than academic histories, historical novels may well convey more information from archives to far more people, and thus shape more directly their knowledge of the past and themselves."³ Because of the historical information that may be transferred from archives to novels or plays by authors of historical fiction, this intersection between archives and

¹ Atwood, "In Search of *Alias Grace*," 1507.

² *Ibid.*, 1505-1506.

³ Tom Nesmith, "Toward the Archival Stage in the History of Knowledge," *Archivaria* 80 (2015): 135.

literature is an important phenomenon to include when considering the influence that historical fiction may have upon the way history is remembered and understood.

The significant movement toward writing historical fiction in Canada began in the last few decades of the twentieth century. Upon the growth and greater appreciation of a national literature in Canada in the 1960s, Canadians were “taken up by the momentous discovery that [they themselves] actually existed, in what was then the here and now, and... busily explor[ed] the implications of that” in their written works.⁴ Atwood revealed that young writers of the late 1950s and 1960s — herself included — were “intently contemporary.”⁵ She explained that to these Canadian writers history either did not exist — it had happened elsewhere — or, if Canadian, it was boring, and was thus not a topic often written about. It is commonly agreed that, while some Canadian authors began to engage in the “digging up of buried things” or to write “novels set in the historic past” in earlier years, the real propensity for writing Canadian historical fiction began in the 1980s, and especially in the 1990s.⁶ The popularity of writing historical fiction has not since abated in Canada. Rather, there is “undeniable evidence of a renewed interest and revitalization of Canadian history,” and Canadian writers have become especially enthusiastic about creating new historical fiction since the turn of the century.⁷

In line with the increased attention to writing historical literature, the impact of archives on literary work has expanded since the latter years of the twentieth century and has been made evident in a number of ways. Nesmith pointed to a number of

⁴ Atwood, “In Search of *Alias Grace*,” 1508.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1509.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1509-1510; Herb Wyile, *Speculative Fictions: Contemporary Canadian Novelists and the Writing of History* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), 4.

⁷ Herb Wyile, *Speaking in the Past Tense, Canadian Novelists on Writing Historical Fiction* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007), 2.

developments that have occurred in recent years, including a lengthy entry on archives in *The Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada* published in 2002 — and the lack of any such entry on archives in the 1986 predecessor volume, recent conferences attended by both archivists and literary scholars, a new ‘sexiness’ attributed to archives even outside of the realm of dedicated literary scholars and historians, and the unprecedented number of Canadian novels that have been based on archival research in recent years.⁸ The importance of access to archives for the authors of written works of history and literature, who rely upon these primary sources, including diaries and personal letters from the “humble bit players” who add texture to the Canadian past and their literary works, has also been given attention of late.⁹

Authors of historical fiction have lately been encouraged to conduct careful and extensive research to avoid historical errors or misconceptions and to produce more realistic and convincing novels, by exploring accounts of daily life, lives of individuals, details of specific eras, information on events, business, and politics, and all other aspects of the human endeavour that are available through archives.¹⁰ Archivists, too, have been encouraged to learn the needs of novelists, to keep in mind archival collections that might be of value to authors, and to learn how authors’ access to information differs from more traditional researchers, in order to help authors become aware of the value that archives

⁸ Nesmith, “Toward the Archival Stage,” 134; JoAnn McCaig, “Archives, Manuscripts, and Special Collections,” in *The Encyclopedia of Literature in Canada*, ed. William H. New (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 38-43.

⁹ For example, note historian Charlotte Gray and novelist Jane Urquhart’s insistence that archives should be accessible and receive greater funding in a 2014 article on access to Library and Archives Canada and its impact upon literature and history; Anne Kingston, “Locked from Public View,” *Macleans*, December 1, 2014.

¹⁰ William Victor, “More on Writing Historical Fiction,” Creative Writing Now, accessed April 8, 2015, <http://www.creative-writing-now.com/writing-historical-fiction.html>; Catherine Lundoff, “Historical Research for Fiction Writers,” Writing World, accessed April 8, 2015, <http://www.writing-world.com/fiction/lundoff.shtml>; Osborne, 1-7.

may have for their research.¹¹ In recent decades, continually increasing numbers of historical fiction authors have conveyed their uses of archival records to the public by sharing their explorations into the past and praising archives and archivists for keeping historical records.

Expansion of Archives Related Fiction

Of course, some Canadian authors recognized the value of archives for writing historical fiction and were using archives in earlier years. Examples include Thomas Raddall, who conducted research using the Sir John Wentworth papers at the Public Archives of Nova Scotia for his novels *The Rover: The Story of a Canadian Privateer* (1958), *The Governor's Lady* (1960) and *Hangman's Beach* (1966).¹² Robert Kroetsch conducted research at the National Archives of Canada for his 1975 novel *Badlands* to ensure accuracy in his descriptions of paleontological exploration in 1916 Alberta.¹³ And Timothy Findley used his family archives, now housed at Library and Archives Canada, as sources and inspiration for his 1977 Governor General's Award winning novel *The*

¹¹ Osborne, 1; Irene Jendzjowsky, foreword in Cheoros, Simonson, and Marshall, *Her Voice, Her Century: Four Plays About Daring Women*, 1; Jendzjowsky, an archivist herself, says that archivists, with their knowledge of archival records beyond the finding aids, could be considered responsible for "disseminating and interpreting the stories archives preserve," and points out the "gems" amidst the records for authors; Caryn Radick, also an archivist and author of the 2016 article "Romance Writers' Use of Archives," anonymously surveyed two hundred authors of popular romance novels to discover whether/how they use archives for their writing, and amongst her conclusions indicates that archivists should pay attention to the needs and requests of authors and consider their "desire to write 'the best stories [they] can' and their willingness to engage with archival materials" as an opportunity for teaching authors and non-traditional researchers to use archives, helping them to have good experiences, and gain advocates for archives, 60-69.

¹² Allan Bevan and W. H. New, "Thomas Raddall (13 November 1903-)," *Canadian Writers, 1920-1959: First Series*, William H. New, ed., *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, vol. 68 (Detroit: Gale, 1988), 280, Accessed 2 Apr. 2017.

<http://go.galegroup.com/uml/idm/oclc.org/ps/retrieve.do?inPS=true&userGroupName=univmanitoba&prodId=DLBC&docId=GALE%7CKKSUBY656374409&authCount=1&u=univmanitoba>.

¹³ Robert R Wilson, "Robert Kroetsch (26 June 1927-)," *Canadian Writers Since 1960: First Series*, William H. New, ed., *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Vol. 53 (Detroit: Gale, 1986), 247, Accessed 4 Apr. 2017.

<http://go.galegroup.com/uml/idm/oclc.org/ps/retrieve.do?inPS=true&userGroupName=univmanitoba&prodId=DLBC&docId=GALE|QXQIRA673608617>.

Wars.¹⁴ Even greater numbers of Canadian authors of fiction began to use archival sources for research as the trend of composing works of historical fiction escalated in the 1980s and 1990s.

The latter decades of the twentieth century saw a number of acclaimed historical fiction novels by Canadian authors who were influenced by archival records. In 1987, Michael Ondaatje published *In the Skin of a Lion*, a fictional story inspired by archival photographs detailing the construction of the Bloor Viaduct in early twentieth-century Toronto.¹⁵ Heather Robertson's 1980s trilogy of historical fiction novels revolving around William Lyon Mackenzie King was loosely based on his and other public figures' archival records.¹⁶ After having "stumbled across" records in the archives, Guy Vanderhaeghe used them as the historical basis for his 1996 play *Dancock's Dance*.¹⁷ Atwood wrote her 1996 novel *Alias Grace* by consulting archival records to piece together as much of the 'real story' of the life and experiences of Grace Marks as she could find.¹⁸ Helen Humphreys' 1997 novel *Leaving Earth* was published after the author's extensive research into Canadian aviation, weather conditions, Toronto, and the role of women in aviation in the 1930s at archives and museums across the country.¹⁹ Jane Urquhart, too, spoke of conducting research in the archives in the later years of the twentieth century. She described "sitting in archives weeping [her] eyes out," unable to

¹⁴ Sara Viinalass-Smith, "Word recognition: Governor General's Literary Awards winners in LAC's collection," Library and Archives Canada Blog, January 10, 2017, accessed April 4, 2017, <https://thediscoverblog.com/tag/canada-council-for-the-arts/>; Timothy Findley, *The Wars* (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin & Company, 1977).

¹⁵ Anastasia Rodgers, "Constructing Beauty: The Photographs Documenting the Construction of the Bloor Viaduct," *Archivaria* 54 (2002): 89.

¹⁶ Herb Wyile, "Heather Robertson: In the Lair of the Minotaur," in *Speaking in the Past Tense*, 241-252, 265.

¹⁷ Herb Wyile, "Making History: Guy Vanderhaeghe" in *Speaking in the Past Tense*, 26; Guy Vanderhaeghe, *Dancock's Dance* (Winnipeg: Blizzard Pub., 1996).

¹⁸ Atwood, "In Search of *Alias Grace*," 1514-1515.

¹⁹ Redhill and Humphreys, "Archives – Between Fact and Fiction."

emotionally disengage from the heartbreaking intimacy of First World War materials dealing with grief, children, and “letters from boys who were tremendously homesick and then were dead.”²⁰ Urquhart revealed that her emotional experience with those materials moved her to begin thinking about *The Stone Carvers*, published in 2001.²¹

Novelists Findley, Ondaatje and Atwood are also some of the earliest Canadian authors to share their experiences using archives as inspiration and historical evidence for fiction writing. In 1977, Findley shared in an interview that original “letters were invaluable” for establishing details in his novel *The Wars*, “because they told of the daily life.”²² Ondaatje described how archival materials informed his research for *In the Skin of a Lion* in a 1987 interview, and Atwood praised and thanked archivists for acting as “guardian angels” of records and preserving the past, and spoke of the value of archival records in the development of her historical fiction story, following the publication of *Alias Grace* in 1996.²³ In recent years, increasing numbers of Canadian authors have spoken about their uses of archival materials and many have echoed Atwood by praising archivists for making records available and by expressing the significant value of archival records for the development of stories based on individuals or events of the past. Because they have spoken publicly about their uses of archival materials, it is possible to observe the proliferation of these uses by Canadian authors in the last decades, and how this may affect Canadians’ interest in archives. The following is a selection of novels, plays, and

²⁰ Jane Urquhart, interview by Linda Richards, *January Magazine*, June 2001, accessed October 1, 2016, <http://www.januarymagazine.com/profiles/urquhart.html>.

²¹ Ibid.; Jane Urquhart, *The Stone Carvers* (Toronto, ON: McClelland & Stewart, 2001).

²² Timothy Findley, interview by Don Harron, “Timothy Findley on his novel *The Wars*,” *CBC Digital Archives*, November 3, 1977, accessed April 4, 2017, <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/timothy-findley-on-his-novel-the-wars>.

²³ Atwood, “In Search of *Alias Grace*,” 1513; Michael Ondaatje, interview by Peter Gzowski, “In the Skin of Ondaatje,” *CBC Digital Archives*, April 24, 2002, (originally aired in 1987), accessed January 23, 2017, <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/in-the-skin-of-ondaatje>.

poems that exhibits the rising numbers of archives-related Canadian fiction published since the beginning of the twenty-first century.

At the beginning of the century, Fred Stenson's novel *The Trade* (2000) was published. For his research into fur trade history, Stenson read many original documents, which included the reminiscences of a twentieth-century fur trader and the records held by the Hudson's Bay Company Archives.²⁴ R.H. Thomson used his own family's archives to write his 2001 play *The Lost Boys*, and he has since talked publicly about his uses of archives.²⁵ In the "Acknowledgments" of her 2003 novel, *Deafening*, Frances Itani praised and thanked the archival coordinators and specialists at the archives of the former Ontario School for the Deaf, the Archives of the Canadian War Museum, and the National Archives of Canada for their expertise and goodwill in providing access to materials and answering her questions.²⁶ She also shared with readers her research process in the archives, and how she incorporated archival materials into her story.

The middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century saw a number of archives-inspired publications. In 1999 the National Archives of Canada released the once restricted portion of the personal papers of Charlotte Whitton, who in the 1950s and 1960s was first female mayor of a major Canadian city (Ottawa). Sharon Bajer used this material to write her 2005 play *Molly's Veil* about Whitton's personal life. The playwright included Library and Archives Canada in her note of thanks in the play's

²⁴ Katherine Durnin, "Archives and Truth in Fred Stenson's *The Trade*," *Canadian Literature* 178 (Autumn 2003): 73; Fred Stenson, "Acknowledgements" in *The Trade* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2000), 511.

²⁵ Nesmith, "What's History got to Do with It?," 19, 24; R.H. Thomson, "Foreword" in *The Lost Boys: Letters From The Sons In Two Acts, 1914-1923* (Toronto: Playwrights Canada Press, 2001).

²⁶ Frances Itani, "Acknowledgements" in *Deafening* (2003; repr., Toronto, ON: Harper Collins Publishers, 2004).

published script.²⁷ In the “Acknowledgements” of her 2005 novel, *A Map of Glass*, Jane Urquhart praised archivists at Library and Archives Canada and the Marine Museum of the Great Lakes at Kingston, Ontario for providing bits of valuable information and inspiring thoughts.²⁸ George Elliot Clark used original records as a “window on the era,” to understand the historical context in which his 2005 novel *George & Rue* is set.²⁹ Nova Scotian Ami McKay shared on her blog that she read “countless historical volumes and documents at libraries and archives throughout Nova Scotia” when researching for her first novel, *The Birth House* (2006).³⁰ Michael Redhill wrote his 2006 novel *Consolation* after being inspired by the earliest known photographs of Toronto — taken in 1857 and lost until 1984 — to imagine what implications the discovery of lost records might have upon a city and its history, and to write a fictional novel in which records of Toronto are hidden beneath the city’s old shoreline, and there discovered 200 years later.³¹ The title of Lawrence Hill’s 2007 novel *The Book of Negroes* points to the author’s use of archival

²⁷ Sharon Bajer, “Playwright’s Notes” in *Molly’s Veil* (Winnipeg: J.G. Shillingford Publishing, Scirocco Drama, 2005); Sharon Bajer, “*Molly’s Veil*,” Sharon Bajer, accessed April 11, 2015, http://www.sharonbajer.com/SITE/Mollys_Veil.html; Jessica Ruano, “Play explores former Ottawa mayor’s lesbian relationship,” *Daily Xtra*, April 22, 2008, accessed October 18, 2016, <http://www.dailyxtra.com/ottawa/arts-and-entertainment/play-explores-former-ottawa-mayors-lesbian-relationship-8757>.

²⁸ Jane Urquhart, “Acknowledgements” in *A Map of Glass* (Toronto, ON: McClelland & Stewart, 2005).

²⁹ Herb Wyile, “We Have to Recover Their Bodies: George Elliot Clarke,” in *Speaking in the Past Tense*, 149-152, 160-161; George Elliot Clarke, *George & Rue* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2005).

³⁰ Ami McKay, “There is no Frigate like a Book,” *Ami McKay* (blog), January 17, 2012, accessed January 31, 2017, <http://amimckay.com/2012/01/there-is-no-frigate-like-a-book/>; Ami McKay, *The Birth House* (Toronto, ON: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2006).

³¹ Michael Redhill, *Consolation* (Toronto, ON: Anchor Canada, 2006); Michael Redhill, “The Old Blog Contents...” *Consolation* (blog), August 14, 2007, accessed December 15, 2016, <http://michaelredhillconsolation.blogspot.ca/2007/08/old-blog-contents.html>; City of Toronto, “The earliest known photographs of Toronto,” City of Toronto Archives, accessed April 11, 2015, <http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=ac7a757ae6b31410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD&vgnextchannel=6512226b48c21410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD>; Thomas Mallon, “Pictures at an Excavation,” *New York Times*, February 4, 2007, accessed April 13, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/04/books/review/Mallon.t.html?_r=0; Geoff Pevere, “Old Photos inspired Michael Redhill’s ‘One Book’ *Consolation*,” *The Star*, February 3, 2008, Accessed April 11, 2015, http://www.thestar.com/entertainment/books/2008/02/03/old_photos_inspired_michael_redhills_one_book_consolation.html.

records. Hill consulted the archival document actually called “The Book of Negroes,” which is a British military ledger that was created following the American Revolutionary War to document the 3000 Black Loyalists who sided with Britain and sailed from Manhattan to Nova Scotia after the war.³² Christina Penner used the Hamilton fonds held at the University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections for her 2008 novel *Widows of Hamilton House*, and thanked the archives in her novel’s “Acknowledgements” for keeping those records accessible.³³

The number of works employing archival records continued to increase in the second decade of the century. Scott Chantler used his grandfather’s and grandfather’s best friend’s wartime records, including his grandfather’s 1943 diary, photographs, and other memorabilia for his historical graphic novel *Two Generals*, and has spoken of the importance of those records for reconstructing details of daily life, personal details, and even the facial expressions of his characters, in this illustrated war story.³⁴ Ami McKay spoke of relying on “the good will of busy people who hold the archival material” to write her 2011 novel *The Virgin Cure*.³⁵ The authors of *Her Voice, Her Century: Four Plays about Daring Women* (2012) dedicated their collection of plays to “archivists everywhere, and the researchers who love them,” and paid tribute to the Provincial

³² Lawrence Hill, *The Book of Negroes* (Toronto, ON: Harper Collins Publishers, 2007); Lawrence Hill, Interview by Nora Young, “Lawrence Hill on *The Book of Negroes*,” *The Arts Tonight*, March 23, 2007, CBC Digital Archives, 5:00-6:40, accessed December 15, 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/lawrence-hill-on-the-book-of-negroes>.

³³ Christina Penner, “Acknowledgements” in *The Widows of Hamilton House* (Winnipeg: Enfield & Wizenty, 2008), 301.

³⁴ Scott Chantler, *Two Generals* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2010); Scott Chantler, “Scott Chantler on *Two Generals*,” YouTube video, 3:51, posted by Random House of Canada, October 20, 2011. accessed April 4, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AgSyhAtzYcs>; Scott Chantler, “Scott Chantler: The Genesis of *Two Generals*,” YouTube video, 5:41, posted by Ignite! Waterloo, March 10, 2011, accessed April 4, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CPUMjvv2Ffw>.

³⁵ Ami McKay, *The Virgin Cure* (Toronto, ON: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2011); Elaine Steinberg, “Interview with Ami McKay by Elaine Steinberg,” *Sunday @ 6 Mag; Magazine for the literary arts*, November 2012, accessed November 15, 2016, <https://sundayat6mag.wordpress.com/interview-with-ami-mckay-by-elaine-steinberg/>.

Archives of Alberta for its source material. In the introduction to their published scripts they described at length their process of creating plays to share stories found in archival records.³⁶ For her 2014 novel *Tell*, Frances Itani delved into the records held at the Deseronto, Ontario town archives to familiarize herself with the town that would be the setting of her post-World War I novel.³⁷ Canadian poetry and fiction writer Aislinn Hunter dedicated her 2014 novel *The World before Us* to an individual that she discovered in the records at the Bethlem Royal Hospital's Archives and Museum in London, and credits the inspiration for her story to the records that were created about him.³⁸ Winnipeg novelist Catherine Macdonald credits her long career as an archivist and historian for the "otherwise useless historical details [stored] away in the back cupboard of her brain, like odd pieces of cloth for a quilt," which, upon waking up one morning with the idea for a mystery novel set in 1899 Winnipeg, she was able to 'pull out of that cupboard' to write *Put on the Armour of Light* (2014).³⁹ In her 2015 novel *The Night Stages*, Jane Urquhart acknowledged the welcoming and instructive staff of the University of Regina Archives, which holds the records of artist Kenneth Lochhead, whose work features in the novel.⁴⁰ For a 2015 art installation, Canadian poet and novelist Martha Baillie borrowed images from the National Archives of Canada to help visually narrate her 2014 novel *The Search for Heinrich Schlögel*, transforming it into a

³⁶ Dedication in *Her Voice, Her Century: Four Plays about Daring Women*; Karen Simonson, Introduction to *Her Voice, Her Century: Four Plays about Daring Women*.

³⁷ Frances Itani, acknowledgements in *Tell* (Toronto, ON: Harper Collins Publishers, 2014), 320.

³⁸ Aislinn Hunter, *The World Before Us* (Toronto, ON: Doubleday Canada: 2014); Aislinn Hunter, interview by Shelagh Rogers, 15:30-16:39.

³⁹ Catherine Macdonald, *Put on the Armour of Light* (Toronto, ON: Dundurn Press, 2014); Catherine Macdonald, "About," The Charles Lauchlan Mystery Books, Accessed October 22, 2016, <http://www.charleslauchlan.com/>.

⁴⁰ Jane Urquhart, "Acknowledgements" in *The Night Stages* (Toronto, ON: McClelland & Stewart, 2015).

story that could be “actively participated in and explored.”⁴¹ Lisa Bird-Wilson has been applauded for “prob[ing] the history and legacy of Canada’s residential school system” in her debut poetry collection *The Red Files* (2016), and for using archival source material to do so.⁴² Ami McKay thanked the “amazing” librarians and archivists at the New York Historical Society and the New York Public Library in the “Acknowledgements” of her 2016 novel *The Witches of New York*, and has spoken often of the importance of archival research for her historical fiction writing process.⁴³ And, in the “Playwright’s Notes” of *Sarah Ballenden* (2017), Maureen Hunter acknowledged that she could not have written her play without the “rich resources of the Hudson’s Bay Company Archives” which “brought Red River to life for [her] in ways [she] couldn’t have imagined.”⁴⁴

This list of Canadian-authored twenty-first century novels, plays, and poems — whose authors have made known in *some way* that they used archival resources as part of their research — is indicative of the growing connection between Canadian fiction and archives. Yet, this list is undoubtedly incomplete. I have surely not encountered every work by Canadian authors who have used archival records, and many may have used archival records without acknowledging that publicly.⁴⁵ Indeed, for many of the above-listed works of fiction, readers or audiences may only become aware that the novel, play, or poem before them is related to archives in some way because its author has highlighted

⁴¹ Malka Greene, “Mirror Images: Exploring Erratics,” Koffler Gallery, 2015, accessed March 15, 2017, <http://kofflerarts.org/publication/2016/03/17/erratics-martha-baillie-malka-greene-with-alan-resnick/>.

⁴² Lisa Bird-Wilson, *The Red Files*, (Madeira Park, BC: Harbour Publishing, 2016); Jonathan Ball, “Poetry probes residential schools,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, Saturday, November 26, 2016.

⁴³ Ami McKay, “Acknowledgements” in *The Witches of New York* (Toronto, ON: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2016), 507.

⁴⁴ Maureen Hunter, “Playwright’s Notes” in the theatre program for *Sarah Ballenden* by Maureen Hunter, Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre, Winnipeg, May 13, 2017.

⁴⁵ Upon conducting research for this chapter, I found more and more examples of Canadian authors who had conducted research in archives and original documents, and had to select which authors’ experiences using archives to highlight in the following pages. I make no claim that this chapter includes mention of *all* Canadian authors of historical fiction who have used archival materials or original records.

his or her uses of archival materials. Whether they signify only briefly that they used archival materials, or expound upon the value of archives in their work, authors who indicate their uses of archives contribute to the evidence of the continually expanding uses of archives by Canadian historical fiction writers.

Exploring Canadian Fiction Writers' Uses of Archives

As well as simply mentioning that a link exists between their work and archives, a number of authors have also spoken very highly of archives as a source for historical evidence and inspiration, and have described their experiences working together with archivists, imagining in archives, or discovering material that they have incorporated into their fiction writing. Authors who have spoken to the media and various audiences about how they use archival materials to write historical fiction provide insight into *how* archival materials have been used to write fiction, the extent to which archival materials play a role in their novels, and what their intentions were upon using archival records. They provide readers with an understanding of the sort of relationship that exists between archives and these literary figures. The following are fascinating examples of how archives intersect with Canadian fiction, which are identifiable because authors have made them known.

Margaret Atwood is an excellent example of an author who used archival materials to write historical fiction, and has shared with readers her process of doing so. Atwood's *Alias Grace* tells the story of an individual as it was discovered upon searching through archival records. Atwood shared that upon beginning her novel in the early 1990s she already knew the story of her protagonist, Grace Marks — and had already made

several attempts to write Grace's story.⁴⁶ "This time," she related, she "went back to the past," and explored the records detailing the story of Grace Marks.⁴⁷ The fictionalization of the life and experiences of Grace Marks is pieced together through the perspectives and memories that Atwood came across during her research.

Atwood recounted that she was confronted with discrepancies amidst archival records, and was often frustrated both by the things that past recorders had written down, as well as by what they had left out. She found herself wrestling not only with who said what about Grace Marks, but also with now-obscure details of daily life — such as "how to clean a chamber pot, which footgear would have been worn in winter, the origins of quilt pattern names, and how to store parsnips" — which were not written down.⁴⁸

Atwood settled on the following guideline for herself: "when there was a solid fact [amid the records] I could not alter it...every major element in the book had to be suggested by something in the writing about Grace and her times, however dubious such writing might be; but in the parts left unexplained — the gaps left unfilled — I was free to invent."⁴⁹

Atwood thus revealed the extensive role that archival records played as she wrote her novel. Although she emphasized that *Alias Grace* is very much a novel — "since there were a lot of gaps, there is a lot of invention" — Atwood made clear that she was committed to staying close to archival records throughout her novel, and informed her readers straightforwardly about the relationship that exists between archival records and invention in her novel.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Atwood, "In Search of *Alias Grace*," 1512-1513.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 1513.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 1514.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 1515.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Michael Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion* is another example of the intersection between archives and authors of CanLit that has been made well known, both by the author's own acknowledgement of having consulted archival records and published papers that have studied the phenomenon since the publication of the novel in 1987.⁵¹ In an interview conducted shortly after the publication of his novel, Ondaatje noted that the construction projects in Toronto in the 1920s and 1930s had been of specific interest to him, and led him to consider historical records relating to the construction of Toronto's Bloor Viaduct in the early twentieth century. Ondaatje explained: "all the archival stuff just tells you how much sand was used in building the bridge, but nothing about the *people* who were building the bridge."⁵² Recognizing the incompleteness of the story told in the official archival photographs and records of the construction, Ondaatje visited the Multicultural History Society of Ontario Archives in Toronto and here listened to many interviews of "Turks, Macedonians, Greeks, everyone" who had just moved to Canada, and thus heard a history of Ontario that he had never heard before.⁵³ Ondaatje wrote *In the Skin of a Lion* as a fictional history of the construction of the Bloor Viaduct and early Toronto from the perspectives of imagined immigrant construction workers.⁵⁴ By using the historical records of immigrants who had come to Canada in the 1920s and 1930s, as well as the archival records depicting the construction of early Toronto, Ondaatje's novel presents a fictionalized alternative perspective on the history of Toronto that only exists

⁵¹ See Anastasia Rodgers, "Constructing Beauty," 72-91; and Dennis Duffy, "Furnishing the Pictures: Arthur S. Goss, Michael Ondaatje and Imag(in)ing of Toronto," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 36 no. 2 (2001): 106-129.

⁵² Ondaatje, interview by Peter Gzowski, 3:00-4:00.

⁵³ *Ibid*; Rodgers, 89.

⁵⁴ Ondaatje, interview by Peter Gzowski, 3:00-4:00.

“outside of the frame” of the archival and photographed history of Toronto’s construction.⁵⁵

Since the title of Lawrence Hill’s *The Book of Negroes* is taken from an archival document, the relationship between fiction and archival record is easily detected. The novel tells how the record containing the names of the Black Loyalists who sailed from Manhattan to Nova Scotia after the American Revolution was created. Hill’s story is about the people whose names were written in “the Book”, and how having their names recorded in the ledger affected the rest of their lives.

Although Hill has described consulting the Book of Negroes as a “very rich experience,” he did not choose to tell the story of an individual recorded in its pages.⁵⁶ Hill’s protagonist, Aminata, and her characterization and life events, are his own invention, and not based on a historical figure.⁵⁷ Yet, the document, its purpose, the information recorded in it, and the circumstances of its creation are described carefully in the novel. In the novel, Aminata’s name is recorded in The Book of Negroes as she flees to Nova Scotia, and the document “becomes central into her story.”⁵⁸

At the end of *The Book of Negroes*, Hill noted in “A word about history” that “some of the excerpts [included in the novel] from the Book of Negroes are real, and others have been invented or altered,” and also informed readers where they can see the archival document in archives and the UK.⁵⁹ By naming his novel after the archival record, describing how he used it and where it may be viewed, and speaking widely about

⁵⁵ Rodgers, 88-89.

⁵⁶ Jessie Sagawa, “Projecting History Honestly: An Interview with Lawrence Hill,” *Studies in Canadian Literature* 33 no. 1 (2008): 315.

⁵⁷ Hill, Interview by Nora Young, 9:00-13:00.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 6:40-6:50; Hill, *The Book of Negroes*, 293-297.

⁵⁹ Hill, “A Word about History” in *The Book of Negroes*, 472.

the important document — even taking a televised trip to view the original Book of Negroes at the National Archives in London — Hill has highlighted the archival document that is at the heart of his bestselling novel and subsequent CBC television dramatization of the novel.⁶⁰

The authors of the collection of plays, *Her Voice, Her Century: Four Plays about Daring Women* (2012), began their project with the intention of searching through the archives for stories to retell on stage. Simonson, Cheoros and Marshall selected stories about Canadian women discovered in the records of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, and drew heavily on archival materials including photographs, journals, letters, newspapers, and court transcripts upon turning the stories into stage productions.⁶¹ Their plays tell the stories of a female English doctor stationed in Alberta's unsettled north that is based on her actual correspondence and journal entries, two early Canadian photographers and the romantic relationship that letters found in their archival fonds seem to imply, a female journalist reporting during the First World War, whose story is adapted from the letters she wrote home and the articles she wrote, and a young secretary who accused an Alberta politician of scandalous behaviour, which is based on newspapers of the 1930s and transcripts of the trial that ensued.⁶²

As well as describing the group's objective of sharing the stories found in archives that "rarely see the light of day," in her introduction to *Her Voice, Her Century*,

⁶⁰ Reg Sherren, "Author Lawrence Hill meets the Queen" (Television), hosted by Dianne Buckner, aired July 29, 2008 on CBC TV's *Around the World*, accessed April 14, 2015 through *CBC Digital Archives*, <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/author-lawrence-hill-meets-the-queen>.

⁶¹ Simonson, 3-7; Hope McIntyre, Review of *Her Voice, Her Century: Four Plays about Daring Women* by David Cheoros, Karen Simonson and Debbie Marshall, *Prairie Fire*, June 10, 2014, accessed April 11, 2015, <http://www.prairiefire.ca/her-voice-her-century-four-plays-about-daring-women/>.

⁶² Provincial Archives of Alberta and Brindle & Glass, "Her Voice, Her Century: Four Plays about Daring Women by David Cheoros, Karen Simonson, and Debbie Marshall" (Evite), Alberta Culture & Tourism, accessed April 11, 2015, culture.alberta.ca/paa/eventsandexhibits/HerVoice_Edmonton_evite.pdf; McIntyre, Review of *Her Voice, Her Century: Four Plays about Daring Women*; Simonson, 3-5.

Simonson shared the authors' process of finding stories, writing them in a way that would translate well on stage and yet contain elements of the archival documents, and choosing how carefully to stay true to the records.⁶³ The playwrights' emphasis on the importance of archival records in their productions and their ties to the Provincial Archives of Alberta are made well known to audiences of their plays and readers of their scripts.

Winnipeg actress and playwright Sharon Bajer also wrote a stage production based on a story that she found in the archives. She shared in the "Playwright's Notes" of her 2005 play *Molly's Veil* that she was intrigued upon learning about a "secret box" of archival records, and then further inspired by what she discovered inside the box.⁶⁴ *Molly's Veil* tells the story of the first female mayor of a major Canadian city, Charlotte Whitton, Mayor of Ottawa (1951-56 and 1961-64), and is based on her letters and personal journal, which were donated to the National Archives of Canada by Whitton with the stipulation that they not be opened until 25 years after her death.⁶⁵ Bajer disclosed in her note that she was able to learn about the public life of Whitton — including her role as a pioneer in the development of child welfare in Canada, and her reputation as an outspoken, witty, and controversial mayor through available sources. The former mayor's private life and relationships, however, were only found out about in the secret box of records made public in 1999.⁶⁶ *Molly's Veil* is an "emotional portrait of a unique woman: crusader, politician, and loving partner," and portrays the private life of Charlotte Whitton, which was shielded from public view throughout her life.⁶⁷

⁶³ Jendzjowsky, 1; Simonson, 3-7.

⁶⁴ Bajer, "Playwright's Notes" in *Molly's Veil*.

⁶⁵ Sharon Bajer, "*Molly's Veil*," http://www.sharonbajer.com/SITE/Mollys_Veil.html.

⁶⁶ Bajer, "Playwright's Notes" in *Molly's Veil*.

⁶⁷ Sharon Bajer, "*Molly's Veil*," http://www.sharonbajer.com/SITE/Mollys_Veil.html.

In a private email communication in December 2016, Winnipeg author Catherine Macdonald shared with me the value of archival materials for fiction-writing, how her past as an archivist and historian affects how she writes historical fiction, and how archival materials inspired her novel *Put on the Armour of Light* — which was recently shortlisted for the Carol Shields Winnipeg Book Award.⁶⁸ As an archivist in Winnipeg, Macdonald had long been familiar with the records at the University of Manitoba Archives and United Church Archives of the Reverend Charles W. Gordon — the inspiration for her character Charles Lauchlan. It was only years later, however, after having read the memoir of the Winnipeg Presbyterian minister and pondering how it compared to the archival record of his life that “something clicked” for Macdonald: “something sparked in my imagination, something that engaged the story telling part of my brain.”⁶⁹ Macdonald began to wonder, “what would happen if I wove a murder mystery into the love story?” and thus began the Winnipeg-based Charles Lauchlan Mystery novels.⁷⁰

Macdonald also says that intimate archival documents offer valuable glimpses of the inner lives of real people and act as “sparks to the tinder of [her] imagination” for the development of her own characters.⁷¹ As an example, for her second book she spoke of writing a female character who is interested in the serious study of physics, and of searching for diaries, letters and memoirs left by women scientists of the early twentieth century that might “reveal the very rough road they travelled to break into this most male

⁶⁸ Catherine Macdonald, email communication, December 7, 2016. Special thanks to Catherine Macdonald for graciously sharing with me the influence that archival records and her past as an archivist had upon her novel, and for allowing me to include the details she shared in my own work.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

dominated of fields.”⁷² Macdonald made this important statement to express the significance these sorts of intimate archival materials have in the development of fictional characters that resemble actual people in the past: “You can imagine your way into the head of a character, but having access to the experiences and feelings of a real person in similar circumstances reveals often surprising details that you wouldn’t otherwise think about.”⁷³

Macdonald said that she prefers to work within the “nest” of “what actually happened and what actually was there” to make her story stronger — but she admitted that this might be a remnant of her conditioning as an archivist and historian.⁷⁴ Upon writing her first novel, Macdonald realized that sticking only to historical fact would limit her story, and concluded: “the business of fiction is fiction.” Although she invents with “a tinge of regret,” for Macdonald “story trumps facts every time,” and she invents places, buildings, characters, or events “without guilt” if it makes for a better story.⁷⁵ To use archival materials to write fiction, Macdonald sets aside her conditioning as archivist and historian to ensure her stories are not limited by the facts that may be found in the records, but are allowed to develop around the details she chooses to incorporate with characters and events that she feels free to make up.⁷⁶

Aislinn Hunter has spoken highly of her experience conducting research in the Bethlem Royal Hospital Archives for her 2014 novel *The World Before Us*, even dedicating her novel to a historical figure that she discovered in the archives. In an interview for the CBC Radio program “The Next Chapter,” Hunter excitedly described

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

stumbling across an original letter written by the poet Tennyson to a convalescent hospital following a visit to his home by some patients who had escaped the hospital, and how her entire novel sprang from this incident, and further archival research:

I was doing research at Bethlem hospital, very incredible archives there, they let you go in, you're looking at these case books from patients, their true stories, all this spidery handwriting, crinkly paper, you're in these deep narratives, deep private personal narratives, with people's behaviors, fears, neurosis, periods of wellness... And I *actually found*, in original sort of research, I found the real human being who knocked on Tennyson's door, through detective work...and so he's the person I ended up dedicating the book to...because his adventure really helped me create the book, if he hadn't had that adventure, Tennyson wouldn't have written the letter, and I wouldn't have imagined this world as I did!⁷⁷

Hunter allowed herself to be guided by her archival research and the stories and experiences of individuals she discovered. She was inspired to piece together her own story surrounding one she imagined from within the records.⁷⁸ As well as using archival materials as inspiration for her story, Hunter featured an archivist character as the novel's protagonist. The novel's protagonist shares many of Hunter's own experiences searching through the archives and imagining the stories that go with the records and artifacts found there throughout the novel, resulting in an altogether positive portrayal of archives and experiences using archival records for its readers.⁷⁹

Canadian author Frances Itani is another who has used archival materials to write highly acclaimed historical fiction novels, and, in an exciting exception to the norm, her uses of archives have been spoken of extensively. Itani's novels *Deafening* (2003) and *Tell* (2014) — and a novel still in progress that will complete the trilogy — are set in

⁷⁷ Hunter, interview by Shelagh Rogers, 13:30-16:40. (Transcription of interview, emphasis is my interpretation of the intonation of the oral version.)

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Note: Hunter's novel is not a traditional historical fiction novel, as it is set in the present. Rather, the novel deals with history through the narrative voices' remembrance of past events and the archivist-protagonist's historical research. Hunter's inclusion of an archivist character in her novel, and her fictional presentation of archives and archivists will be further discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

World War I and postwar Deseronto, Ontario.⁸⁰ Itani has made use of the Deseronto town archives to conduct research, a detail which has made its way into articles about the release of *Tell*, interviews conducted with Itani about her novel, and comments on Itani's work from both the Deseronto archivist and residents of the town.⁸¹ The Deseronto Archives maintains a relationship with the author, and welcomed Itani for a launch of *Tell* in 2014, and again in 2015 to mark the choice of *Deafening* for the Tri-County Reads program, which included a walking tour of Deseronto with stops at locations featured in her novels and a talk from Itani on the inspiration for and writing of *Deafening* and *Tell*.⁸² The Deseronto Archives blog even invites individuals interested in being interviewed for Itani's next Deseronto-based novel to contact the archives.⁸³

Itani has had high praise for the Deseronto Archives and its "informed, innovative and exemplary" archivist, as well as other archives and archivists that she has encountered as part of her research for *Deafening* and *Tell*, and has freely shared insights into her relationship with the archives and her incorporation of archival materials into her novels.⁸⁴ Itani expressed her special thanks for permission to "track the footsteps of Joseph H. Macfarlane of No. 9 Canadian field Ambulance" at the Archives of the

⁸⁰ See then Deseronto town archivist Amanda Hill's, "Francis Itani revisits Deafening and plans her next Deseronto book," *Deseronto Archives* (blog), October 19, 2015, accessed November 19, 2016, <https://deserontoarchives.wordpress.com/category/events/>.

⁸¹ "Frances Itani: Getting it Right," *Quill & Quire*, July 2003, accessed April 11, 2015, <http://www.quillandquire.com/authors/getting-it-right/>; Luke Hendry, "Belleville-born author Frances Itani won acclaim for new book's prequel," *The Intelligencer*, August 29, 2014, accessed April 11, 2015, <http://www.intelligencer.ca/2014/08/29/belleville-born-author-frances-itani-won-acclaim-for-new-books-prequel>.

⁸² Amanda Hill, "Annual Statistics," *Deseronto Archives* (blog), accessed November 19, 2016, <https://deserontoarchives.wordpress.com/about/some-statistics/>; Hill, "Francis Itani revisits Deafening and plans her next Deseronto book."

⁸³ Hill, "Francis Itani revisits Deafening and plans her next Deseronto book."

⁸⁴ Hendry, "Belleville-born author Frances Itani won acclaim for new book's prequel."

Canadian War Museum while she “created [her] own fictional character, Jim.”⁸⁵ She shared what a “moving and exhilarating” experience it was to discover newspaper excerpts written by deaf children in the archives of the former Ontario School for the Deaf, through which the voices and stories of these children “began to emerge.”⁸⁶ And she described how extensive research into the events and experiences of individuals during the years 1900 -1919 allowed her characters’ “inner selves to move around [her] imaginative landscape.”⁸⁷ In recounting how archival research influences her novels, Itani expressed her pleasure in discovering archival records and imagining the stories around or within them for the purposes of her own story: “one looks at a photograph or sees an image... and then it just starts becoming and becoming and becoming, it can become anything, [and] this is where the imagination is quite wonderful...”⁸⁸ While Itani has noted instances in which she used archival excerpts in her novel “exactly as [she] found them,” and worked hard to recreate the world that might have existed a hundred years ago, she has also recreated original documents for inclusion in the pages of her novels and replaced or invented details found in the records to fit her own characters and story.⁸⁹ Itani has no qualms about recreating the details that she discovers amidst the records to suit her own fictionalization according to her fiction-writers’ license to imagine.

Canadian author Ami McKay relied upon archival materials and historical inspiration for each of her bestselling historical fiction novels, and has spoken about her

⁸⁵ Itani, “Acknowledgements” in *Deafening*; “In Her Own Words: An Interview with Frances Itani,” in *Deafening* by Frances Itani, (2003; repr., Toronto, ON: Harper Collins Publishers, 2004), 6-7, 11.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Frances Itani, interview with Alan Neal, “Frances Itani returns to Deseronto,” *CBC Radio One: All in a Day*, September 5, 2014, accessed April 11, 2015, <http://www.cbc.ca/allinaday/2014/09/05/frances-itani-returns-to-deseronto/>.

⁸⁹ Ibid; “In Her Own Words: An Interview with Frances Itani,” in *Deafening*, 11; “Background notes to *Deafening*,” in *Deafening*, by Frances Itani, (2003; repr., Toronto, ON: Harper Collins Publishers, 2004), 13-15.

research into the history of the Canadian Maritimes and New York, midwifery in the 1900s, witchcraft, her own great-grandmother, and little-known histories of women and girls for her novels *The Birth House* (2006), *The Virgin Cure* (2011), and *The Witches of New York* (2016). Although she also used archival records as background research for her debut novel, which features a midwife in early twentieth-century Nova Scotia, McKay has mainly discussed how archival materials inform her most recent historical novels set in New York City. She says that it was important for her to bring New York to life, and to make it as historically accurate as possible. In her effort to do so for her novel *The Virgin Cure*, which is set in 1871 on the Lower East Side, she consulted primary sources at the New York Public Library (NYPL) and New York Historical Society Library and Archives including newspapers, a census of the period, reports by social workers and physicians of the time, case studies of girls living on the street in the 1870s, and an annual guide to the brothels of the city titled *A Gentleman's Companion to New York City*.⁹⁰ When beginning to write *The Witches of New York* McKay recounted that she was searching through the archives in New York for a story to set in 1880 when she discovered a classified ad for "...anyone in this city who knows how to get rid of a witch," and from here kept digging through newspapers and writings of the time for mentions of séances, healers, and other folk magic tradition.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Ami McKay, interview with Shelagh Rogers, "Amy McKay on the *Virgin Cure*," *CBC Radio: The Next Chapter*, January 16, 2012, 4:30-7:00, accessed November 13, 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/books/2012/01/ami-mckay-on-the-virgin-cure.html>; Steinberg, "Interview with Ami McKay by Elaine Steinberg;" Ami McKay, interview with Erica Ehm, "Lunch with Ami McKay, *Yummy Mummy Club*, November, 2011, accessed January 31, 2017, <http://www.yummymummyclub.ca/culture/books/lunch-with-ami-mckay>.

⁹¹ Rebecca Dingwell, "A witchy chat with author Ami McKay," *The Coast*, October 31, 2016, accessed November 12, 2016, <http://www.thecoast.ca/halifax/a-witchy-chat-with-author-ami-mckay/Content?oid=5761578>; Jodi deLong, "Ami McKay talks suffragists, her family tree and a blue marble," *Local Xpress*, November 19, 2016, accessed November 20, 2016,

McKay has made remarks in interviews, Q&A sessions, and in her blog about her love for “digging” and “sifting” through materials in the archives to find a story, and her uses of archival materials to carefully flesh out the historical times and places in which her stories are set. Recently she even took to Twitter to share with her followers that she could not have written her New York novels without the NYPL’s 100 historical newspaper databases.⁹² Reviewers, too, have noted that the author’s love of “meticulous historical research is evident” in her “richly researched” novels “packed with enticing historical detail” and giving “a gently archival feel” to her work, and have sometimes even mentioned the “troves of inspirational treasure” that McKay has found in the archives and transferred into her novels — indicating an awareness of the author’s use of archives.⁹³ McKay is another author who, in describing her process of writing historical fiction, has shared with readers the stories that may be found in the archives exclusively, and has invited readers to understand how a novelist’s exploration of archival and primary documents may inspire and enhance historical fiction.

Canadian authors, including Itani, McKay, Hill and Atwood, demonstrate how archives might be used for the development of excellent historical fiction. They also make it possible for readers to discover this connection by speaking about it publicly. These authors have told of using archives to fact-check or search for evidence for stories

<https://www.localxpress.ca/local-arts-and-life/ami-mckay-talks-suffragists-her-family-tree-and-a-blue-marble-465986>.

⁹² Ami McKay, Twitter post, December 19, 2016, accessed December 26, 2016, <https://twitter.com/SideshowAmi/status/810873589905944580>; McKay, interview with Erica Ehm.

⁹³ Tara Henley, “Enchanting read sparks women’s horror,” *Hamilton Spectator*, November 1, 2016, accessed November 20, 2016, <http://www.thespec.com/whatson-story/6942087-enchanting-read-sparks-women-s-horror/>; Jodi deLong, “The Witches of New York goes deep into the world of magic,” *Local Xpress*, November 19, 2016, accessed January 24, 2017, <https://www.localxpress.ca/local-arts-and-life/the-witches-of-new-york-goes-deep-into-the-world-of-magic-466055>; Alix Hawley, “Review: Realism and magic clash in Ami McKay’s *The Witches of New York*,” *Globe and Mail*, November 4, 2016, accessed November 12, 2016, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/books-and-media/book-reviews/review-realism-and-magic-clash-in-ami-mckays-the-witches-of-new-york/article32674809/>.

set in historical time periods. They have described perusing the archives with the intention of discovering great stories to represent in works of fiction, or exploring archives without a specific destination in mind, and being inspired to write about the people or happenings recorded there. They have relayed their aims of becoming familiar with time periods, events, places, or individuals of the past for fictional stories. Authors have communicated their emotional responses to archival records, or the ways that archival records have inspired them to imagine beyond the records. They have acknowledged that archival records do not hold the whole story of the past, and have recounted their processes of imagining and inventing to fill in the gaps to represent history through storytelling. In describing their experiences using archival materials, these authors have allowed their readers insight into the relationships that they have with archives.

Fiction ‘Versus’ History

Further, as well as providing a glimpse of this intersection between Canadian literature and archives, these authors allow for an exploration of how an archival influence over literary work may impact readers’ understanding of history. Writers of historical fiction are frequently asked “Is it real?” or “What’s true?”. Authors who have spoken about their uses of archival records or primary sources to write historical fiction are likewise asked how closely the characters or events that they present resemble their factual counterparts, or how carefully their stories represent what appears in the archival records that they consulted.⁹⁴ Because historical fiction is widely read and may play a

⁹⁴ Herb Wyile interviews 11 Canadian authors of historical fiction novels in *In Speaking in the Past Tense* (2007), and in these interviews many authors discuss their perspectives on the balance between creating strong stories and/or remaining true to historical evidence. See also Byrony J. Lewicki, Review of *Speaking in the Past Tense: Canadian Novelists on Writing Historical Fiction* by Herb Wyile, *Quill & Quire*, (April

role in audiences' comprehension of events, eras, or figures of the past, a concern exists about the level of 'truth' in these depictions of history.

The question of whether fiction can represent history truthfully is not a new one. Indeed, in the early nineteenth century, fact was perceived as truth, and fiction as the opposite of truth and "a hindrance to the understanding of reality rather than as a way of apprehending it."⁹⁵ Accordingly, at this time there began a movement that aimed to "expunge every hint of the fictive, or merely imaginable, from [representations of history], to eschew the techniques of the poet and orator, and to forego what were regarded as the intuitive procedures of the maker of fictions in [the] apprehension of reality."⁹⁶ In his 1978 essay "The Fictions of Factual Representation," Hayden White argued for acceptance from historians and critics of fiction writers' interest in events that are "assigned to specific time-space locations" *as well as* events that are "imagined, hypothetical or invented."⁹⁷ He maintained that the depiction of reality constructed by fiction writers corresponds with "some domain of human experience which is no less 'real' than that referred to by the historian," and should not be considered a question of truth.⁹⁸ White's case in 1978 is part of the broader discourse at the end of the twentieth century surrounding narratology and its erasure of traditional boundaries between fiction and non-fiction or fictional and historical narratives.⁹⁹

2007), accessed April 4, 2017. <http://www.quillandquire.com/review/speaking-in-the-past-tense-canadian-novelists-on-writing-historical-fiction/>.

⁹⁵ Hayden White, *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 123.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 122.

⁹⁹ See Lubomir Doležel, "Fictional and Historical Narrative: Meeting the Postmodernist Challenge," in *Narratologies: New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis*, ed. by David Herman (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 247-273; And Herb Wyile, "History, Theory, and the Contemporary Canadian Historical Novel," in *Speculative Fictions*, 3-33.

The century-old discourse about whether fiction should be allowed to count as a historical narrative is now accompanied by an increasing resistance to history that is told as a unified story about the past, in favour of a broader interpretation of ‘history writing’ initiated at the turn of the twenty-first century. Herb Wylie outlined the early discourse as an assertive ideal for presenting history “as it really was,” as an objective mirror reflection of the past — an ideal that has since been recognized as unachievable because of the fragmentary nature of historical evidence and the gaps amidst traces of the past that must be filled by historians in their efforts to reconstruct a complete picture of the past.¹⁰⁰ While some theorists and historians maintain that they can come close to presenting a “true” picture of the past through “methodological rigor and critical questioning of historical evidence and historians’ own assumptions,” others have shifted from this narrow narrative of history in favour of reworking previously accepted ideological, philosophical, and methodological principles of history writing.¹⁰¹ By dispensing with the traditional view of history as a static picture of the past, writers of history — including writers of historical fiction — have begun to unearth and tell stories that were previously left out, neglected, or marginalized.¹⁰² As part of this process, novelists have contributed to the exploration of what history *is*, how it may be represented, and what it means to depict the past. Wylie put forward this case for historical fiction as a “truer” representation of the past than pure history-writing; although fiction does not concern itself with veracity to the same extent as historical writing, it may present a more

¹⁰⁰ Wylie, *Speculative Fictions*, 8-10.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 5-7, 11.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 5-6.

complete and universal truth in that historical fiction can come closer to the human heart and understanding.¹⁰³

Even though many writers, critics, and theorists have acknowledged fiction's validity as a representation of history in the last number of decades, this remains a tricky subject. Questions about how the past may be presented in fiction remain.¹⁰⁴ In 2008 Maria Margaronis asked the following difficult questions relating to literary work that engages explicitly with historical events through the writers' re-imagination of them: "What responsibility does a novelist have to the historical record? How much — and what kinds of things — is it permissible to invent? For the purposes of fiction, what counts as evidence? What are the moral implications of taking someone else's experience...and giving it the gloss of form?"¹⁰⁵ These questions and many discussions about them remain relevant in the ongoing conversation about how history should be narrated, and how representations of history through fiction affect collective memory.¹⁰⁶ Meanwhile, writers of historical fiction create guidelines for themselves that correspond with their own views on how history may be presented in fiction, and defend themselves

¹⁰³ Ibid., 8-9.

¹⁰⁴ Wylie, *Speaking in the Past Tense*, 12-14; Wylie, *Speculative Fictions*, 5-6.

¹⁰⁵ Maria Margaronis, "The Anxiety of Authenticity: Writing Historical Fiction at the End of the Twentieth Century," *History Workshop Journal* 65 (2008): 138.

¹⁰⁶ Many works in memory, history, theatre and literature studies that consider how collective and societal memories and comprehension of history are affected by representations of history have been published in recent years. See for example: Geoffrey Cubitt, *History and Memory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007) for further reading on collective memory and other memory theories; Nicola A. Faieta, "'Guy Talk': An Interview with Guy Vanderhaeghe," *Studies in Canadian Literature* 35, no. 1 (2010), accessed May 16, 2017, <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/SCL/article/view/15950/17200>, and Guy Vanderhaeghe, "Apprehending the Past: History versus the Historical Novel," (lecture, University of New Brunswick, February 16, 2010), *The Trudeau Foundation Papers*, Vol. 2 (Montreal, QC: The Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation, 2010): 73-95, for a historical fiction writer's perspective on the role and value of historical novels in the apprehension of the past; Janis E Haswell, "Students, Teachers, and the Aftermath of the Horrors: Reflections on Teaching Martel's *Beatrice and Virgil*," *English Language and Literature Studies* 3.3 (2013): 28-47, accessed May 16, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ells.v3n3p28> for a discussion on the benefits of using a fictional representation of history to teach history to students; or Christian J. Krampe, *The Past is the Present: The African-Canadian Experience in Lawrence Hill's Fiction* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang AG, 2012), accessed May 16, 2017, *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*, on the validity of Hill's representation of the African-Canadian past in his novels.

with the argument that, as fiction writers, they are ‘licensed to invent’ and are under no obligation to restrict their imagination or follow rules about what may or may not be invented.¹⁰⁷

A number of the Canadian novelists and playwrights of twenty-first century historical fiction who are featured in this thesis have acknowledged the discourse surrounding historical fiction and the representation of history. Many have indicated the extent to which they incorporated archives into their fictional work, and have spoken about the degree of accuracy that they strove for in representing history and the information in records. The intents of the authors who have shared their stance on presenting history through fiction, and the guidelines that they create for themselves, vary. Although a desire to write believable histories seems prevalent, most authors have said that they do not necessarily make an effort to stay close to historical facts, but rather use their license as authors of fiction to dream up great stories.

Margaret Atwood revealed something of the responsibility to represent what she discovered in the archives as she researched the life of Grace Marks. Upon discussing the discrepancies amongst the archival records and the various perspectives on Grace Marks and her life experiences Atwood stated, “I felt that, to be fair, I had to represent all points of view.”¹⁰⁸ By devising a guideline for herself and allowing herself to invent only when there was no fact to be found, Atwood made known her desire to represent the story of Grace Marks as accurately as possible in her fictionalization of Marks’s life. Yet, in reflection upon whether her story tells the truth, Atwood allowed, “a different writer, with access to exactly the same historical records, could have...written a very different sort of

¹⁰⁷ Wylie, *Speculative Fictions*, 17.

¹⁰⁸ Atwood, “In Search of *Alias Grace*,” 1515.

novel.”¹⁰⁹ Atwood concluded that, although she wrote her novel to tell the story as she made sense of it in the records, the “truth is sometimes unknowable, at least by us.”¹¹⁰

Authors Cheoros, Simonson and Marshall also made it a priority to stick closely to the archival records that they use to write their plays. Simonson revealed that, as an archivist and historian herself, she wished to be “accurate, to represent the words and thoughts of [the] subjects and their time periods,” whereas Cheoros, “a theatre guy, [was] always concerned about the narrative, about creating a kind of story arc.”¹¹¹ Simonson made clear that she and her co-playwrights stayed as close to the archival records as possible — except for those places where the records did not quite tell the whole story, and the authors filled in the gaps based on their understanding of the people with whom they were dealing and what they were able to gain from existing records.¹¹² Together, the authors paid close attention to how archival materials, and the stories and information found therein, were translated for their audiences through storytelling.

Lawrence Hill was asked in regard to these questions about historical fiction: “...since [*The Book of Negroes* is] based on historical reality, what do you feel is the fiction writer’s responsibility to the past?”¹¹³ His response was that each historical novel must be treated differently, but that *The Book of Negroes* is a novel that “purports to represent history faithfully.” He noted that he took some liberties throughout the novel, but wanted it to be accurate in its overall depiction of events.¹¹⁴ Hill said, “I wouldn’t like it if a historian came behind me and said, ‘This is preposterous. The things that Hill is

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Simonson, 4.

¹¹² Ibid, 5.

¹¹³ Sagawa, 316.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

having take place in this novel are utterly impossible, never happened and never could have happened.’ ”¹¹⁵ He concluded, “It doesn’t so much matter if they never happened, but I would like them to be plausible and to make sense.”¹¹⁶ Hill’s feeling of responsibility to present history as honestly as possible is evident in his explanation for the way that history is depicted in his novel. Yet, he allowed that his novel is fictional, and thus may include events, individuals, times or places that are of his own invention and fit into the history that his novel presents.

Michael Ondaatje revealed his level of commitment to depicting factual history in *In the Skin of a Lion* upon answering the question “Is everything that you say about Ambrose in the book really historical?” — in reference to a historical figure who features in Ondaatje’s novel.¹¹⁷ Ondaatje laughed as he answered: “Well the first part is, the first four or five pages...this *is* a novel.”¹¹⁸ Ondaatje did not make excuses for making up the story of a historical figure whose real life story is unknown, nor for the other historical details that he invents in *In the Skin of a Lion*; indeed, Ondaatje’s novel as a whole does not attempt to depict a factual history, but asks readers to look past the history evident in historical records, and to consider the history that is not recorded.

Frances Itani has often said that her archival and additional historical research for writing historical fiction is crucial, but she has also noted that “there comes a point during the research process when an historical novelist says: Enough. Now I will tell my story.”¹¹⁹ Although Itani found it important to use excerpts from the former Ontario

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ondaatje, Interview by Peter Gzowski.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. (Transcription of interview, emphasis is my interpretation of the intonation of the oral version.)

¹¹⁹ Greatwar100reads, “An Interview with Frances Itani, Author of Deafening and Tell,” *Great War 100 Reads* (blog), November 7, 2015, accessed January 6, 2017,

School for the Deaf newspapers exactly as children had written them to head the chapters of *Deafening*, and she conducted extensive research in order to write “densely layered detail(s) that would drop the reader into the world” in which her hundred-year-old stories are set, her stories are of her own invention and the worlds in which they take place are fictional.¹²⁰ To Itani, invention is one of the wonderful things about being a novelist. She shares the feeling that whether or not they represent history exactly novelists and fiction-writers should feel free to use their “unlimited imagination.” Otherwise, “of course”, they “wouldn’t be writing fiction.”¹²¹

Catherine Macdonald wants to create a realistic and believable representation of the past in her novels, without taking away from the “magic” of fiction:

The kind of historical fiction I like to read, and that I try to write, is the kind where there is a real feeling of authenticity to the setting and the period details, conveyed not with pedantic exactitude but with the magic combination of good research and expressive writing. This is a literary act and when it is done well, the writer creates a world for the reader to inhabit, a world that strongly resembles the real world of the past and draws much of its power from the closeness of that resemblance. But in the end it is a fictional world, a creation, and the writer is not trying to re-construct the past in any didactic way.¹²²

Macdonald concluded that it is not fiction’s job to “provide a truthful picture of the past” for its readers. Although she prefers to work within “what actually happened,” she invents without guilt to make her story stronger.¹²³

Fred Stenson’s 2000 novel *The Trade* represents archival records to show that the “real meaning” behind historical records may be lost to knowledge, and that historical records are subject to interpretation, misinterpretation, and revision to determine the

<https://greatwar100reads.wordpress.com/2015/11/07/an-interview-frances-itani-author-of-deafening-and-tell/>.

¹²⁰ “In Her Own Words: An Interview with Frances Itani,” in *Deafening*, 11; “Background notes to *Deafening*,” in *Deafening*, 13-15.

¹²¹ Itani, interview by Alan Neal.

¹²² Catherine Macdonald, email communication, December 2016.

¹²³ Ibid.

meaning and contextualization of history. Stenson's novel foregrounds the partial nature of historical knowledge, whether it is made known through fiction or historiography.¹²⁴ Katherine Durnin, in her article on *The Trade*, further discussed the meaning of historical truth in fiction. She pointed out that in novels where authors have taken advantage of their license to invent, "some of the 'historical' content may be imagined, but the interpretation of the events and characters in question, the meaning given to them by the fiction, may be true historically as well as fictionally."¹²⁵ In response to Stenson's novel, Durnin concluded that through narrative and the invention of characters authors of fiction might indeed bring more meaning to historical fiction, although perhaps not absolutely true.¹²⁶ Durnin agrees with many authors of historical fiction that the status of historical fiction, as *fiction*, means that the question of its empirical truth simply cannot be asked.¹²⁷

Value of Fiction for Conveying Knowledge of History

The value of historical fiction is in its ability to draw readers into stories about relatable individuals set in the past that may well prompt greater understanding of (and interest in) history than histories that only present the demonstrable facts. Lawrence Hill described his choice for writing a work of historical fiction rather than a history in response to the question, "Why is it important to deal with [the history of the black Loyalists in *The Book of Negroes*] as art rather than as non-fiction or just as history, or what does it give it that you wouldn't get from it as pure history?" Hill explained,

I think it's extremely difficult for the ordinary person...to picture the life and individuality behind the concept of a slave; the slave seems to be sort of a faceless, nameless, dark, chained, mysterious person, who doesn't really have a humanity. But one thing that the novel affords that's a little trickier in works of

¹²⁴ Durnin, 73-74.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 74.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 75.

history is to create the human face and the human struggle that give the history life and...a beating heart. I think it's easier to step into history sometimes if we can see human struggle and human drama.¹²⁸

Hill's statement demonstrates how fiction writers aim to captivate their audiences in a "domain of human experience" that is relatable and illuminating, and thus exhibit an image of reality.¹²⁹ By transporting their readers to another time and place through storytelling and engaging with audiences on an emotional and relatable level, writers of historical fiction can affect readers in a powerful way not typically afforded to writers of 'pure history,' and thus may shape the way that audiences of their works remember and understand historical events, figures, or time periods.

Additionally, historical-fiction writers who use archival records may further inform readers' or audience members' perception of, or interest in, history. Through their work, knowledge found in archives is conveyed to the public, little known historical episodes previously discoverable only through archival research are given a wider audience, and original records created by the very characters of history introduced to readers in historical fiction are showcased. Moreover, if authors' uses of archival records are publicly known, readers are allowed to recognize which historical details could not have been a part of the stories they enjoy without archives; works of fiction that are known to relate to a 'true story' found in original archival records may pique the interest of readers and inspire them to discover more of the background of the historical events, times, or figures that are featured. The relationships of novels, plays, and other works of fiction with archives may allow audiences to learn otherwise unknown historical details, may influence readers to further pursue historical knowledge and search out the archives

¹²⁸ Hill, interview by Nora Young, 14:00-15:00.

¹²⁹ White, 122.

themselves, or may simply leave readers with a more complete understanding or memory of the past. The uses of archives by the Canadian authors considered in this chapter are significant and numerous. They provide varied examples of how archival and historical knowledge may reach people through historical fiction writing.

The Book of Negroes is an important example of the societal impact that historical fiction based on archival materials can have. The story presented in Hill's novel has been referred to as a "little known and almost forgotten piece of Canadian history," and Hill himself revealed that the document "The Book of Negroes" is "pretty well unknown in this country."¹³⁰ Hill's novel — which is highly acclaimed internationally, has won several awards, and was in 2015 turned into a six-part nationally televised miniseries watched by millions of viewers — brought the history of Black Loyalists to the fore, and reminded audiences of this important episode in Canadian history.

Similarly, the collection of plays in *Her Voice, Her Century* has been praised for its incorporation of archival records that reveal pieces of little known Alberta history on stage. Audience members learn about "racy sexual politics" and a "vivid population [of] gutsy, adventurous, colourful women" that were a part of Alberta's past, and take "a delightful trip into recent history...the closest one could come to experiencing, touching, tasting how life would have been" in the plays put together by the local authors.¹³¹

Likewise, Sharon Bajer's play *Molly's Veil* tells a little known story about a woman whose public life is well known within Canada's political-historical canon. By telling the

¹³⁰ Lawrence Hill, interview by Nora Young; Reg Sherren, "Author Lawrence Hill meets the Queen."

¹³¹ Liz Nicholls, "*Her Voice, Her Century*: the daring women of our history take the limelight," *Edmonton Journal*, October 2012, accessed April 15, 2015, <http://blogs.edmontonjournal.com/2012/10/02/her-voice-her-century-the-daring-women-of-our-history-take-the-limelight/>; Provincial Archives of Alberta and Brindle & Glass, "*Her Voice, Her Century: Four Plays about Daring Women* by David Cheoros, Karen Simonson, and Debbie Marshall" (Evite).

story about Charlotte Whitton found in a seldom before seen “secret box” in the archives, Bajer broadened the perception and altered the historical memories of her audience.¹³²

Atwood’s archives-inspired *Alias Grace* will reach a new audience through its adaptation as a miniseries that was filmed in 2016, and will air on Netflix and CBC Television in September 2017.¹³³ Publicity for the miniseries highlights that Atwood’s inspiration for her historical fiction is the “real-life 1843 Upper Canada murders” for which “notorious Irish-Canadian maid...Grace Marks” was convicted.¹³⁴ Atwood’s fictional depiction of the real-life story, her careful research of the place, time, and people involved, her acknowledgement of the alternating accounts and records of the historical events — and perhaps even her praise for archives! — will now come to the fore and reach an even broader audience than that of her award winning 1996 novel.

Frances Itani’s *Deafening* and *Tell* have also been influential. Residents of Deseronto have pointed out that they have learned much about the history of their town through Itani’s writing and her research in the local archives.¹³⁵ Itani has inspired residents of the town to use the archives themselves, and has encouraged them to know their family and local history better.¹³⁶

¹³² Bajer, “Playwright’s Notes” in *Molly’s Veil*.

¹³³ Martin Knelman, “Margaret Atwood brings her prescient tales to the small screen,” *Globe and Mail*, January 18, 2017, accessed January 19, 2017, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/television/margaret-atwood-brings-her-prescient-tales-to-the-small-screen/article33658324/>; “Alias Grace to premiere on CBC on Sept. 25,” CBC Books, May 18, 2017, accessed May 19, 2017, <http://www.cbc.ca/books/2017/05/watch-the-trailer-for-sarah-polleys-alias-grace-adaptation.html>.

¹³⁴ Conan Tobias, “Sarah Polley-directed *Alias Grace* set to film in Toronto,” *Quill & Quire*, May 17, 2016, accessed January 19, 2017, <http://www.quillandquire.com/book-news/2016/05/17/sarah-polley-directed-alias-grace-set-film-toronto/>; “Sarah Polley’s adaptation of *Alias Grace* to air on CBC and Netflix,” CBC Books, June 21, 2016, accessed January 19, 2017, <http://www.cbc.ca/books/2016/06/sarah-polley-alias-grace-margaret-atwood-cbc-netflix.html>.

¹³⁵ Hendry, “Belleville-born author Frances Itani won acclaim for new book’s prequel.”

¹³⁶ Frances Itani, “Acknowledgements” in *Tell*, 320; Hendry, “Belleville-born author Frances Itani won acclaim for new book’s prequel.”

Ami McKay may have affected her readers' perceptions of the times and places featured in her novels by speaking about the importance of archival research for them, by informing readers of her objective to make her stories come alive in the historical time and place in which they are set, and by including historical notes in the margins and chapter headings of her novels. McKay has created fictional historical worlds for her readers to enter. They in turn have voiced their appreciation for the author's inclusion of carefully researched historical details and documents that "convey the sights, sounds, and attitudes of her story's time and place."¹³⁷

Michael Ondaatje's and Michael Redhill's uses of archival materials for their award winning historical novels set in Toronto are spotlighted at the City of Toronto Archives, which has created programs featuring archival records used by the authors in writing *In the Skin of a Lion* and *Consolation*.¹³⁸ The archives invites high school and university literature classes to view photographs documenting the construction of the Bloor Street Viaduct, early Toronto maps, tax records, city directories from the early twentieth century, and other documents that influenced or were used by the authors.¹³⁹ As a part of the archives' programs, readers of Redhill's and Ondaatje's novels discover background information and the truth behind the historical details and events that take

¹³⁷ Tara Henley, "Enchanting read sparks women's horror," <http://www.thespec.com/whatson-story/6942087-enchanting-read-sparks-women-s-horror/>; Rohan Maitzen, review of *The Witches of New York* by Ami McKay, *Quill & Quire* (October 13, 2016), accessed November 20, 2016, <http://www.quillandquiere.com/review/the-witches-of-new-york/>; Hawley, "Review: Realism and magic clash in Ami McKay's *The Witches of New York*."

¹³⁸ City of Toronto, "Michael Redhill's 'Consolation,'" City of Toronto Archives, accessed Nov. 29, 2016, <http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=791a757ae6b31410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD&vgnnextchannel=6512226b48c21410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD>; City of Toronto Archives, "Michael Ondaatje's 'In the Skin of a Lion,'" City of Toronto Archives, accessed Jan. 12, 2017, <http://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=819e757ae6b31410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD&vgnnextchannel=6512226b48c21410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD>.

¹³⁹ City of Toronto, "Michael Redhill's 'Consolation,'" City of Toronto Archives, "Michael Ondaatje's 'In the Skin of a Lion.'"

place in the two fictional histories. They also learn how and why authors use archival resources in the development of historical fiction.¹⁴⁰

By learning about these authors' uses of archival materials and exploring the very archival records used by them, readers of Ondaatje's and Redhill's novels both engage with the history of Toronto by relating to the human experiences of the characters, as perhaps only the license fiction permits can approximate, and engage with primary historical documents created in Toronto's early years. This is an exciting and prominent example of how Canadian archives and fiction intersect, and may influence and even further readers' understanding of history and archives. In like manner, other Canadian authors who use archival records in their historical fiction writing may also engage with readers through stories about the past, and use the archival connection to make readers more aware of the historical context in which their stories take place, inspire interest in historical background information about the time periods, individuals, or 'true events' depicted, and influence the way those details of history are remembered.

Contemporary Canadians — authors and readers both — are increasingly interested in their own history, and have made historical fiction a popular genre in recent years.¹⁴¹ As Wylie has pointed out: "...there is really no need to invent stories when Canada's past is filled with a wealth of material for writers to develop in their fiction, something Canadian novelists seem increasingly inclined to do!"¹⁴² In recent decades Canadian historical fiction has received high acclaim internationally. Some novels have been called 'Canadian Classics,' won awards, and been recommended as books every

¹⁴⁰ City of Toronto, "Michael Redhill's 'Consolation;'" City of Toronto Archives, "Michael Ondaatje's 'In the Skin of a Lion.'"

¹⁴¹ Wylie, *Speculative Fictions*, 3-4.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 4.

Canadian should read. This important and acclaimed literary work plays a noteworthy role in informing society's understanding of Canadian history.

Along with the rise of Canadian historical fiction as a device for cultivating Canadians' interest in Canada's past, historical fiction authors' uses of archival materials have increased as well.¹⁴³ This expanding archival and literary phenomenon is evidenced by the number of authors who have praised or thanked archivists and spoken about using archival materials in the development of their stories in recent decades.

Thanks to those Canadian authors who have spoken about the ways that archival materials have inspired or informed their work, and the extent to which they allow primary archival sources to influence their works of fiction, it was possible to write this chapter and to make preliminary observations about the growing relationship between Canadian historical fiction and archives. This relationship has helped Canadian historical fiction to play an important role in remembrance of the past, yet not many readers know about this phenomenon. However, the incorporation of archival materials into works of fiction, and authors' positive and public responses to archives, does make available favourable comments about archives. This continually expanding connection is an encouraging development for Canadian archives and archivists, and one that deserves additional study in order to pursue further possible inspiration in archives for historical fiction, as well as the many other ways in which archives can enrich Canadians' knowledge of society, history, and memory.

From literary figures' uses of archives, this thesis now turns to yet another key feature of the relationship between Canadian literature and archives — archives and archivists in the plots of Canadian novels. Canadian authors have the ability to draw

¹⁴³ Wylie, *Speaking in the Past Tense*, 2-9.

attention to archives both by speaking about the connection between archives and the research that goes into their work, and by depicting archives or archivist characters in their works of fiction.

Chapter Three: Depicting Archives in Recent Canadian Novels

Members of the Canadian literary world, through their donations of records to archives or uses of archival materials in their work, have developed relationships with archivists and have become familiar with archival work. Many Canadian novelists and other authors who have used archival materials in their research have sung the praises of archivists, and have shared the value of conducting archival research as part of the process of creating their literary works. And, in the last few decades, Canadian authors have contributed to the growing archival presence in works of fiction. Canadian authors' placement of archives and archivists in the plots of their novels has become yet another important way that archives and the literary world intersect in Canada.

Unfortunately, a disconnect exists between the positive way that archives are spoken about in the Canadian literary world and the stereotypical characterizations that still cling to the archival image in fictional works. Archivists have for decades noted that the archival image as it appears in literature — in novels, especially — is often misrepresented or depicted stereotypically in negative ways. They have voiced concern that works of literature may adversely affect the way they are perceived and valued in society, and have made suggestions for how the fictional archives or archivist could be more accurately represented. In recent years archivists have made appearances as more central characters in novels, and archivists have hoped that, alongside the already growing relationship between archives and the literary world, this might be a sign of authors' continuously developing appreciation for the importance of archives and archival work and might result in more positive depictions of archives and archivist characters in works of fictional literature. This chapter considers whether a shift toward

better representations of archival work and more positive portrayals of archivists is apparent, and notes evidence for and against it.

Recent History of Images of Archives

The representation of the archival image in works of literature, popular culture, news media, documentaries, advertising, television, and films has been a topic of interest for archivists, and has been well documented over the years. Arguments have been made that the identity and power of archivists, and the value placed upon archival work, are directly dependent upon how society perceives and understands archives and archivists — a perception that, it has been commonly agreed, may be influenced by the way the archival image and archival work are characterized in all manner of archival representation. Hence, archivists are concerned about how they and their work are depicted for audiences of archives-related fiction. Over the years, members of the archival community have spoken at conferences and conducted studies and surveys to disseminate observations and concerns about the ways in which the archival profession has been represented for society, and have thus documented the evolution of the archival image over time.

In 1956, Society of American Archivists' President Ernst Posner wrote that, while some representations of European archivists could be found in fiction, “the sad truth” was that it was impossible to analyze the American archivist in literature, as archivists were of so little interest to the American people at this time that no archivist-character had yet made its way into any significant literary work.¹ Canadian archivist Peter Gillis pointed in 1980 to archival themes of secrecy, crime, and espionage that could be found in ‘spy

¹ Ernst Posner, “What, Then, Is the American Archivist, This New Man?” *The American Archivist* 20, no. 1 (1957): 4.

fiction' written throughout the middle of the twentieth century. He suggested that, while flattering to archivists that fiction writers consider them "so essential to the spy game," it might be beneficial for archivists to highlight the openness and accessibility of records for research and scholarship, to thwart the impression that archives are closed and secretive spaces that might spring from their depictions as such in spy novels.² American archivist and Professor of Archival and Information Studies, Richard J. Cox, noted it was in the early 1980s that the archival community discovered that it had developed a public image as a result of the way archives and archivists had been portrayed in newspapers — and that archivists were not impressed with this newly discovered image.³ A 1984 report titled *The Image of Archivists: Resource Allocators' Perceptions* is cited often to indicate that archivists had reason to worry about the negative stereotypes surrounding archival work. The report indicated that archives were viewed as musty and dirty, that archival work, while admirable, was considered frivolous, and that archivists were seen as passive and responsible for the low priority given their work by society.⁴ A considerable number of studies have since been conducted to examine the way that the archival image has been depicted in news media, television documentaries, films, and British and North American works of fiction, with the general conclusion that stereotypes such as those listed in the 1984 report have persisted over the years.⁵

² Peter Gillis, "Of Plots, Secrets, Burrowers and Moles: Archives in Espionage Fiction," *Archivaria* 9 (Winter 1979-1980): 3-11.

³ Cox, "International Perspectives on the Image of Archivists and Archives," 195.

⁴ Mark Greene, "The Power of Archives," 18; Sidney J. Levy and Albert G. Robles, *The Image of Archivists: Resource Allocators' Perceptions* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1984): i-v.

⁵ See Barbara L. Craig, " 'What the Papers Say' "; Richard J. Cox, "International Perspectives on the Image of Archivists and Archives"; Kathleen Epp, "Telling Stories around the 'Electronic Campfire' "; Suzanne Keen, *Romances of the Archive in Contemporary British Fiction*; Karen Buckley, " 'The Truth is in the Red Files' "; Arlene Schmuland, "The Archival Image in Fiction"; Tania Aldred, Gordon Burr and Eun Park, "Crossing a Librarian with a Historian"; Caryn Radick, " 'Complete and in Order' ."

American archivist Arlene Schmuland published a significant study in 1999 that surveyed the archival image as it appears in one hundred twenty-eight novels written over more than a century. Schmuland found that, while archivists and archives made significantly more appearances in literary works written in the last three decades of the century, by the end of the twentieth century archivists were still rarely anything but supporting characters in fiction⁶ — and usually stereotypical, one dimensional, or inaccurate characterizations at that. Schmuland asserts that novels have the ability to disseminate information and images, and may well serve as the sources for preconceived notions about archives and archivists held by members of society. She points out that for decades fiction writers have created archivists with similar character traits and physical characteristics, used the same impressions and phrases to refer to archives, and repeated judgements about the usefulness and importance of archivists' work, and have thus perpetuated the stereotypical image of the archive and the archivist, and intensified the misconceptions of audience members.⁷ At the end of her 1999 study, Schmuland pointed out that “novelists [were] including archives and archivists in their writings more and more every passing year,” and, rather than improving the archival image in fiction, increasing numbers of representations were only strengthening stereotypes.⁸ Schmuland concluded by advising archivists to begin combatting stereotypical impressions about archivists to change the societal opinion of them for the future.⁹ Schmuland's article is the most comprehensive study of the archival image in literature to date. No study has been undertaken to review the literary inclusions of archives and archivists in fiction

⁶ Schmuland, 24.

⁷ Ibid., 26.

⁸ Ibid., 52-53.

⁹ Ibid.

written since the beginning of the twenty-first century, or to consider whether depictions of archives and archivists may have evolved or improved in novels since then.

Two studies, both of which were published in 2008, were conducted to consider how the archival image has been depicted in popular culture or film. Canadian archivist Karen Buckley explores stereotypes surrounding archival institutions, how they feature in popular culture and popular works including novels, television shows, and film, and how they compare to the ‘real archival experience.’¹⁰ Canadian archivists Tania Aldred, Gordon Burr and Eun Park survey representations of archivist characters in films to determine whether established stereotypes about archivists are present in that medium.¹¹ These 2008 studies are indicative of the continuing concern for the way that archives and archivists are presented in popular works, and how these portrayals persistently shape the way society thinks about archives into the twenty-first century.

The studies conducted by Buckley and Aldred et al., together with Schmuland’s extensive overview of fictional depictions of archivists appearing in novels through the end of the twentieth century, serve as a valuable background for how the depictions of archives and archivists have changed throughout the end of the twentieth- and beginning of the twenty-first century, how archivists have responded to representations of archives, and as an overview of the stereotypes that continue to appear in conjunction with the depictions of the archival image in fiction. The most stereotypical and exasperating images of archives and archivists that these authors have noticed, discussed, and lamented consist of awkward secondary characters who are easily dismissed and defined

¹⁰ Buckley, 98.

¹¹ Aldred et al., 85-86.

only by their profession as archivist, doing frivolous or mysterious and secretive work in dark and dirty archival spaces.

Archives are with regularity described as dirty, dusty, ill-lit, basement or tomb-like spaces where records and information are lost, or buried like treasure or the dead.¹² Schmuland, in explanation for the “vastly over-used” motif of “lost” or “buried” records in dust-filled archives offers that, while not all archival repositories are dirty, musty, or malodorous, these images are often used by authors to convey a sense of age and a sense of history to archives in fiction.¹³ Similar vocabulary connoting ‘age and history’ has been adopted by many authors who feature archives or archival records in their work, even outside of fiction — ‘unearthing’ or ‘excavating’ records; archivists who are ‘buried’ under piles of records; or the discovery of valuable records in the ‘backyard’ are clichés commonly applied to fictional representations of archives, and are used as well to speak about archives in news stories, in reports given by archivists themselves, and in other articles written by scholars.¹⁴ These tropes used to evoke the image of archives have been pervasive for decades, and have moved neatly beyond fiction to be accepted by society.

The term ‘archives’ itself has been given a number of meanings in fiction. It has been used to connote the potential to represent history, to provide information, to bear or reveal the truth, to hold all types of secrets, history, or garbage, to refer to manuscript and rare book collections and, of course, to reference the physical space of an archives.¹⁵

¹² Buckley, 109-110; Schmuland 42, 44.

¹³ Buckley, 110, Schmuland, 45.

¹⁴ Richard J. Cox, “What Should the Fictional Archivist Look Like?” *Reading Archives* (blog), November 26, 2006, accessed March 4, 2017, <http://readingarchives.blogspot.ca/2006/11/what-should-fictional-archivist-look.html>; See as an example: Todd Fitzgerald, “Expert Cracks Mystery of Historic Manuscript Found Buried in Trafford Council Archives,” *Manchester Evening News*, February 10, 2015, accessed March 1, 2017, <http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/expert-cracks-mystery-historic-manuscript-8610847>.

¹⁵ Schumland, 27, 33; Keen 27.

American Professor of English Suzanne Keen points out that she found ‘archives’ most often appear in British romance novels to reveal a truth or solve a mystery in “a hidden cache of documents,” and that the characters who venture into the archives searching for these hidden truths are usually risk-taking researchers “questing in the archive” for “intellectual adventure.”¹⁶

Other characters to appear in fictional archives are usually archivist characters acting as researchers or historians. The profession of archivist in works of fiction dictates many of the archivists’ characteristics. These characters are expected to fit the mold of what society expects of an archivist and, even beyond their work, are expected to exude ‘archivalness.’ Whether mistaken as librarians or treated as guardians of the records and gatekeepers of the past, typical descriptions of fictional archivists include glasses-wearing, introverted, soft-spoken, intelligent, solitary, dedicated, dutiful, well-educated, serious, all-knowing, pompous or condescending, efficient, or curious individuals, with an innate desire to discover lost knowledge or conduct research that might only be appreciated by society in a hundred years.¹⁷ These characters are also frequently depicted as reclusive and socially inept, without sexual experience or personal relationships, subsumed by their occupations, unable to cope with the real world outside of the repository, or to be treated as ‘less than human,’ as if as a *result* of their careers as archivists.¹⁸ In their analyses of how archivists have been portrayed in fiction, Schmuland, Buckley, and Aldred et al. give a great deal of attention to how fictional archivists are characterized as a specific result of their profession, and made remarkably

¹⁶ Keen, 10, 14, 27. Note: Keen’s analysis does not include to any great extent the way that archival institutions or archivists are depicted, but rather the way that archival materials and research are presented in Romantic British fiction.

¹⁷ Schmuland, 34-40, 42; Buckley, 100, 102.

¹⁸ Buckley, 102; Schmuland, 36, 38; Aldred et al., 75.

similar observations. This continuity over time is evidence of the well-established and unchanging stereotypical characterizations of archivists in fiction since the publication of early novels read by Schmuland, and the widespread, and likely tenacious, misconceptions about archivists held by society.

While many of the portrayals of archivists in fiction are somewhat negative, both Schmuland and Buckley acknowledge aspects of these characterizations that point to the weight that archivists' positions carry in society. Although archivists are characterized as individuals who disregard their personal appearance and lack social lives, readers may understand that it is because archivists are so intent upon their work that they do not have time or attention for the less important aspects of life.¹⁹ Archivists are also presented as responsible for the memory of history and the keepers of the truth. These characters have the authority to bestow credibility upon the records of the past, and thus influence the history that will live on in the memory of society.²⁰ With such great responsibility, archivists must be trustworthy and dedicated to their careers, and are depicted as such.

Richard Cox suggests that “the fact that there are many fictional portrayals of archives and archivists may be more than satisfactory as a testament to the importance of their role in society, even if often the worst stereotypes and characterizations are employed.”²¹ He points out that authors use stereotypical images because “these features provide a kind of shorthand for both the writer and his or her readers” by allowing for the creation of quickly recognizable characters or images.²² Cox's argument, written in 2006, acknowledges that improvements in the way that archivists are depicted are uncommon,

¹⁹ Buckley, 103; Schmuland, 35, 41.

²⁰ Buckley, 102.

²¹ Cox, “What Should the Fictional Archivist Look Like?”

²² Ibid. Note: Schmuland, 34, also speaks to the value stereotypes hold for authors who wish to say something meaningful about a character quickly.

perhaps because of the usefulness of stereotypes in quickly conveying images, but suggests that the increasing number of archivists and archives in fiction, and the appearance of archivists as newly prominent characters in fictional novels, are positive developments.²³

Previous studies of the way that archives and archivists have been portrayed in fiction provide context for a consideration of how Canadian novels have depicted them over the years. The literature on archival images in fiction to date is missing two things: a survey of how the archival image has appeared in specifically Canadian fiction; and a review of how the archival image has appeared in novels since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Only a handful of the novels included in Schmuland's pre-twenty-first century survey are by Canadian authors, and inclusions of works of Canadian literature in the 2008 studies by Buckley and Aldred et al. are few. A number of significant archivist characters have appeared in Canadian novels, especially since the beginning of the twenty-first century — contributing to the positive wider phenomenon of increasing numbers of archivists positioned as principal characters in fiction, and possibly even providing contenders for previously absent “truly iconic representations of archivists.”²⁴

Portrayals of Archivists in Canadian Novels

Notable archivists in Canadian novels include: Lou, Marian Engel's lonely archivist protagonist in her 1976 novel *Bear*; Professor James Darcy Pieixoto, fictional Director of the Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Archives at Cambridge University,

²³ Cox, “What Should the Fictional Archivist Look Like?”

²⁴ Schmuland 24; Buckley, 100; Buckley observes that no “truly iconic representations of archivists” have yet appeared in fiction. She identifies the “conflicted and numb title character in Martha Cooley's *The Archivist*,” as an example of a fictional archivist that does *not* fill her expectation of an ‘iconic representation of an archivist,’ despite the archivist's position as a principal character.

who appears in the “Historical Notes” section of Margaret Atwood’s 1985 novel *The Handmaid’s Tale* (the notes are part of the novel); Kristy Stevenson, the university archivist in Regina author Gail Bowen’s 2000 novel *Burying Ariel*; Karl Moran, university archivist and protagonist of Richard Teleky’s 2001 *Pack up the Moon*; Luce, the protagonist in Susan Swan’s romantic 2004 novel *What Casanova Told Me*; Martha Baillie’s unnamed archivist narrator in her 2014 novel *The Search for Heinrich Schlögel*; and Jane Standen, a master’s level archival studies graduate and the protagonist of Aislinn Hunter’s 2014 novel *The World Before Us*.²⁵

The Canadian authors who have represented archivists and the work archivists do in their novels have not done so equally. All of the archivist characters depicted by Canadian authors and discovered for evaluation in this chapter are accompanied — to at least some degree — by the stereotypical characteristics that have accompanied archivists for generations. Some of the above-mentioned authors, in their representations of the archival image, latch onto stereotypes that have long exasperated archivists, while others were more kind to the archival profession, and explored and developed archival themes in meaningful ways. Notable and exciting improvements in the way archivist characters are exhibited are apparent in some of the above-mentioned Canadian novels and, particularly in more recently written novels, the portrayals of archives and archivists suggest that a new view of them is taking shape, which may result in changing perceptions and a better understanding of archives and archival work for readers in the future.

²⁵ Marian Engel, *Bear* (1976; repr., Toronto, ON: McClelland & Stewart, 2014); Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985, repr., Toronto, ON: McClelland & Stewart, 2014); Gail Bowen, *Burying Ariel* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2000); Richard Teleky, *Pack up the Moon* (Toronto: Thomas Allen Publishers, 2001); Susan Swan, *What Casanova Told Me* (Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 2004); Martha Baillie, *The Search for Heinrich Schlögel* (Portland, OR: Tin House Books, 2014); Aislinn Hunter, *The World Before Us* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada: 2014).

Before moving on to examine twenty-first century examples, two fictional works of the late twentieth century mark a low point in the fictional representation of archivists in major Canadian literary works. Marian Engel's acclaimed and controversial 1976 novel *Bear* features "for perhaps the first time in literature, an archivist [as] the central figure in a novel."²⁶ The details included about Lou, the archivist, are rife with the stereotypes pointed to by Schmuland in her review of archives-related novels written in the latter decades of the twentieth century.²⁷ Engel likens her archivist's life to that of "a mole, buried deep in her office, digging among maps and manuscripts."²⁸ Lou's basement workspace is filled with "shabby things" and filtered sunbeams "laden with spring dust."²⁹ Records donated to the institute are comprised of all manner of junk, not the least of which is a "wreath of human hair," and Lou and the director of the institute are surprised when "for once...something of real value [is] left to them."³⁰ And, as a result of her profession Lou lives primarily in the past and struggles to return to the present, and feels the "erudite seclusion of her job" has "aged her disproportionately, that she was as old as the yellowed papers she spent her days unfolding."³¹

In a review of *Bear* shortly after its publication, Robert J. Taylor, then archivist for literary records at the Public Archives of Canada, observed that the archival profession in *Bear* is "vague and at times inaccurate," that the fictive archival environment is "obviously not good enough" and "does not really resemble an archives," and stated that, "clearly both Lou and her director should enrol in an archives course as

²⁶ Robert J. Taylor, review of *Bear* authored by Marian Engel, *Archivaria* 3 (Winter 1976/1977): 147.

²⁷ Schmuland, 31, 36.

²⁸ Engel, 1.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

quickly as possible.”³² Taylor grants that *Bear* has great merit as Engel’s “valid and sensitive exploration of a person’s search for identity,” rather than for the accuracy of her portrayal of the archival image.³³ Meanwhile, Engel’s famous novel is a fitting example of a Canadian work of fiction that had the ability to disseminate widely early stereotypical ideas about archives, archivists, and the archival profession, which became pervasive in novels written around the same time.

Atwood’s fictional archivist appeared a decade later in the “Historical Notes” of *The Handmaid’s Tale*, and embodies fewer commonly noted stereotypes. Yet Professor Pieixoto is still not a satisfying characterization of an archivist. Pieixoto gives a keynote address at an academic conference in the year 2195 on the recently discovered *archival* audiotapes documenting Offred’s experience as a “handmaid” during the dystopian Gileadean regime that oppressed women two hundred years before in the former United States. According to Ken Norris, Pieixoto reveals in his sexist and patronizing attitudes that “the informing principles of Gilead have not entirely disappeared” by 2195, as Pieixoto explains in his address that he and other male scholars edited, re-ordered, reinterpreted, and applied “guesswork” to the transcription of Offred’s story — and thus violated and fictionalized the narrative voice of the oppressed woman that readers assume they have read throughout the *Tale*.³⁴ His attitudes, his evident failure “to learn anything of the human equation in Offred’s story,” and his revelation that the narrative of the novel itself is a reconstruction make Pieixoto an unreliable authority and unsympathetic

³² Taylor, review of *Bear*, 147-148.

³³ *Ibid.*, 148.

³⁴ For Ken Norris, see Dominick M. Grace, “*The Handmaid’s Tale*: ‘Historical Notes’ and Documentary Subversion,” *Science Fiction Studies*, 25, no. 3 (1998): 481; see also, 486, 487-488, accessed March 5, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4240726>; Celeste-Marie Bernier and Judie Newman, “‘The Bondwoman’s Narrative’: Text, Paratext, Intertext and Hypertext,” *Journal of American Studies* 39, no. 2 (2005): 147, accessed March 5, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27557633>.

character, and suggest to readers that archivists are not responsible for maintaining the historical reliability and context of the historical records in their care.³⁵ By positioning an archivist as the voice of her discomfiting “Historical Notes,” Atwood reinforces the negative image of archivists as pedantic and condescending academics, and calls into question whether archivists may be trusted to truthfully or ethically preserve history.

Turning toward the new century, a different tone is noticeable, but only emerging. In Gail Bowen’s 2000 novel *Burying Ariel*, a murdered woman is found in the university archives. An author from Regina, Bowen has donated her personal records to the University of Regina Archives, has spoken highly of archivists and her experiences with archives, and was invited to give the keynote paper at the 2015 Association of Canadian Archivists’ annual conference.³⁶ In light of these known details about Bowen’s relationship with archives, I read her 2000 novel with high expectations for how the archival image would be depicted, and was disappointed in the small role that both archives and archivists play in the story. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the brief inclusions of details about the university archives fit stereotypes about archival spaces that have been pervasive for decades, while Bowen’s depiction of an archivist does not correspond with common stereotypes about archivists.

The university archives in *Burying Ariel* is located in the basement of the library, the doors used by the public are “always kept locked,” and the most frequent occupants of the archival space are workmen who use the back door to access “the crawl space that

³⁵ Grace, 481, 487-490; Jennifer A. Wagner-Lawlor, “From Irony to Affiliation in Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*,” *Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 45 no. 1 (2003): 92, accessed March 5, 2017, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00111610309595328>.

³⁶ Bowen, “25 Years of Writing Joanne Kilbourn Shreve.”

has all the heating equipment and plumbing for the building.”³⁷ So little used and out of the way, the protagonist of the novel — who has taught at the university for years — professes to having been in the archives “exactly once,” and the workman who found the murdered woman only ended up in the archives after a “wrong turn” while looking for the “air conditioning in the sub-basement.”³⁸ Contrastingly, aside from combining her character’s work as both librarian and archivist, Bowen mainly does not fall back upon stereotypes in her characterization of university archivist Kristy Stevenson.³⁹ Kristy is described as being elegant, with a “gentle face” and “delicate brows,” moving with “assurance,” and wearing attractive clothing, including a “lavender-blue silk blouse [which] matched her eyes.”⁴⁰ She is also given a “non-university life” that has nothing to do with her position as an archivist, including being “full of surprises” — suggesting her title as archivist does not define her — and a singer in a band called ‘Womanswork’. She played in a punk rock band to pay her way through university — which is “hard to imagine” for the character who reveals this detail, *not* because Kristy is an archivist, but because she is “so elegant.”⁴¹ Rather than being stuck in the past or subsumed by her work, Kristy is up to date with the social issues at the forefront of the novel, and she indicates that she “chose to be an archivist” so that she could make “certain that all the pieces of the puzzle were there for anyone who was seeking answers.”⁴²

Bowen’s illustration of a university archives and archivist in her novel are puzzling. In her keynote speech at the ACA conference, Bowen suggested that her

³⁷ Bowen, *Burying Ariel*, 69.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 2, 32, 69.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 50, 235.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 47-48.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 236.

fictional archivist's ability and desire to provide answers for those who seek them "point to the importance of (archivists') work," and stated that "archives offer us *all* the keys to the kingdom of knowledge and understanding."⁴³ Yet in *Burying Ariel*, the brief references to the university archives indicate very little value is placed upon the archives and its holdings, even by academics of the university. After having read *Burying Ariel*, I am curious about Bowen's experiences with archives, how they informed her somewhat disconnected depiction of a university archives and archivist, and whether the author's perception of archives and archivists shifted between the publication of her 2000 novel and her 2015 address to a conference room full of archivists.

Richard Teleky's 2001 novel *Pack up the Moon* features an archivist protagonist called Karl Moran who appears to have been characterized as an archivist mainly because the career stereotypically suits a protagonist who spends his time delving into and thinking about the past. Two main things are unfortunate about Teleky's portrayal of an archivist character: Karl is so uninteresting that "if you were seated next to [him] at a dinner party, you'd probably start wondering if it were possible to drown yourself when the soup course arrives"; and Karl's characterization as an archivist is so obscure that readers are left with very little knowledge about him at all. Readers only discover Karl's profession midway through Teleky's novel, through a four-page chapter called "An Unrevised Preface" — which readers are to understand that Karl wrote in the introduction to his academic publication *The Mind of an Archivist*.⁴⁴

The only references to archives or archival work in *Pack up the Moon* are found in Karl's preface, in which he makes comments about documents' abilities to teach us

⁴³ Bowen, "25 Years of Writing Joanne Kilbourn Shreve."

⁴⁴ Bonnie Schiedel, Review of *Pack up the Moon* by Richard Teleky, *Quill and Quire*, February 22, 2004, accessed March 15, 2017, <http://www.quillandquire.com/review/pack-up-the-moon/>.

about the past and to exist as memories, ethical issues that surround archival work, and various archival theories.⁴⁵ The problem with Teleky's introduction of archives-related information in this chapter is that it is surrounded with pedantry that requires a reader to have background knowledge on the history of archives in Pergamum and Antioch, archival theories relating to government record keeping, or current attitudes towards archives in Vietnam, in order for the details about archival work to have any meaning.⁴⁶ Some of the topics included in Karl's 'Preface' may be recognizable to fellow archivists or academics in the field, but are unlikely to be familiar to the average reader. The archival theme in Teleky's novel thus functions to strengthen the stereotype of archivists as intelligent, condescending, and superior, and archives as inaccessible to the common user.⁴⁷

Susan Swan is another Canadian author who has encountered archives and archivists throughout her career. Swan has donated her records to the Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections at York University in Toronto, uses archival research to help "construct her stories," and thanks four archivists in the "Acknowledgements" of her 2004 novel *What Casanova Told Me* for their "unstinting support."⁴⁸ Swan's familiarity with archives is evident in *What Casanova Told Me*, as the archival profession of her protagonist, Luce, and the valuable archival documents in her possession are at the forefront of the novel. As well, archival themes, theories, terms, and practices make frequent appearances throughout the novel. This being the case, readers of Swan's novel

⁴⁵ Teleky, 113-114.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 114.

⁴⁷ Schmuland, 38.

⁴⁸ Swan, "Acknowledgements" in *What Casanova Told Me*, 324; Millar, *The Story Behind the Book*, 29-30.

cannot escape gaining some understanding of archives and archivists based on the (sometimes glaringly stereotypical) way that Swan has depicted them.

Swan's novel tells the romantic story of an introverted, sexually inexperienced, and often socially inept archivist acting as the custodian of her family's valuable records as she transports them to the Sansovinian Library in Venice to be on loan there. In traveling outside of the archives, she 'quests' through Europe to find answers about her deceased mother and ancestor, to escape her identity as a "pale, timid archivist," and to find the love that had eluded her before, all guided by the archival journal of Casanova's lover.⁴⁹ Swan's romantic novel coincides in a number of ways with Keen's description in *Romances of the Archive* of a fictional character who takes risks by exploring records of the past to seek and find the truth, and is rewarded with "sex and physical pleasure" for her efforts.⁵⁰

Upon introducing her archivist character, Swan utilizes a plethora of previously developed stereotypes about archivists to ensure that her readers know what sort of character Luce is as a result of her profession. These include references by the narrator, other characters, and Luce herself, to her old-fashioned tendencies, introspective nature, and sexual inexperience.⁵¹ Remarks that the new clothes purchased for Luce's trip, which include "semi-transparent chiffon blouses," "clingy dresses," and "low-cut spandex tops," are "not her usual style," suggest that "lively" clothing is foreign to the wardrobes of archivists.⁵² "Lacking in the romance department" and bewildered by the complexity of love, Luce has two brief romantic encounters along her journey that highlight the

⁴⁹ Swan, 261, 303, 319.

⁵⁰ Keen, 14, 24, 27.

⁵¹ Swan, 37, 41, 83.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 12.

archivist's failure to make discerning judgements or read social dynamics.⁵³ Luce lives vicariously through records documenting her ancestor's love affair with Casanova, while she is unable to find the love she craves in the present.⁵⁴ Only once Luce breaks free of her identity as the "pale, timid archivist" is she able to make a mutual, romantic, long-lasting connection in Swan's novel.⁵⁵

Swan also placed many nuggets of information about archives, archival documents, and archival practices and functions throughout her novel to magnify Luce's role as an archivist, and from which readers might learn something about the archival profession. These include accounts of how archival materials should be cared for, such as "kept out of the open air," "wrapped in acid-free tissue," or by "cradling the spines" of fragile bound documents.⁵⁶ Conservation efforts such as reading photocopies to decrease wear on original records, or keeping "old documents in a special room...where a humidity gauge is fixed at forty percent" are also introduced.⁵⁷ Rules against licking pages, making notes with messy ballpoint pens, or attaching Post-it notes to archival materials are mentioned in relation to archival research.⁵⁸ Explanations are given for terms such as 'custodian of the records' and *fonds d'archive* — "the archival term for an assortment of papers generated by one person in a lifetime" — which Luce knows to use as a result of her archival training, "while most people would be satisfied with calling the documents a collection."⁵⁹ The narrator suggests that archivists 'do what they know best' by finding the thread of connection amongst documents or arranging exhibits of archival

⁵³ Ibid., 37, 83, 108, 210.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 109.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 261, 301-303, 320.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 6, 14, 62.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 7, 321.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 320.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 7, 11.

materials and *fonds d'archives* in satisfying orders.⁶⁰ And, Luce describes the impact of the Internet on document preservation as “a beach churned up with footprints that waves washed away on a daily basis,” and bemoans, “the future will lack the historical records of past generations....Nothing online remain(s).”⁶¹ Although some of Swan’s images of archival work or archival issues in *What Casanova Told Me* are exaggerated or surrounded by stereotypes, and may thus not gain the full approval of archivist readers, many of the references to functions or terms relating to archives throughout the novel inform, rather than mislead, readers about archives.

Unfortunately, even after informing readers throughout the novel about Luce’s responsibilities as an archivist, Swan makes clear near the end of the book her presumption that people — even fellow scholars and academics — generally do not know what archivists do. The following exchange takes place between Luce and an art historian:

Luce: ‘I work at an archives in Toronto.’

Art Historian: ‘You? An archivist? How romantic!... Of course, I don’t precisely know what an archivist does....’

Luce: ‘Librarians store books and archivists preserve evidence...old documents and so forth.’ She was aware of sounding a little pompous. ‘I guess I don’t look like who I am.’⁶²

This excerpt reiterates the stereotype that archivists must *look* like archivists, suggests that Swan thinks Luce *should* feel pompous for simply describing her job as an archivist, and indicates that Swan felt it necessary to explain to readers the difference between a

⁶⁰ Ibid., 248, 310.

⁶¹ Ibid., 48. While Luce is correct in acknowledging that preserving digital documents for posterity is a pervasive challenge, her response is melodramatic. As an archivist, even in the early 2000s, Luce would have had an informed knowledge of the options for preserving digital records, and the studies that have been conducted on this topic since the 1990s. See Adrian Cunningham, “Waiting for the Ghost Train: Strategies for Managing Electronic Personal Records before it is too late,” *Archival Issues* 24, no. 1 (1999). Cunningham’s is one of many examples of well-known studies that consider the challenges of preserving electronic records written well before the publication of *What Casanova Told Me*.

⁶² Ibid., 289.

librarian and an archivist after almost three hundred pages of having already characterized and portrayed an archivist protagonist. This, and other instances throughout *What Casanova Told Me*, might give an archivist reason for exasperation upon reading Swan's 'Romance of the Archive.'

Canadian author and poet Martha Baillie's novel *The Search for Heinrich Schlögel* is a complex and interesting representation of archives and an archivist character in fiction that, while employing some recognizable stereotypes in the presentation of an archivist narrator, moves beyond a one-dimensional portrayal of the archival image and delves into questions about the preservation of history and memory through fictional archives. The novel features an anonymous, self-proclaimed and amateur female archivist-narrator who is attempting to piece together the truth of what happened to Heinrich Schlögel, a German man who finds himself displaced in time after embarking upon a hike in 1980 in Canada's Arctic and mysteriously only returning in the year 2010. She does so by collecting "anything that may have belonged to him, that once lay flat in his palm or was flicked open by his fingers" in her personally created "Schlögel Archives."⁶³

Baillie's novel tells the story of Heinrich Schlögel's strange journey. The characterization and role of the archivist-narrator are found in footnotes that appear frequently throughout the novel, in which she informs readers about her thoughts and methodology as she conducts research, describes the records that she has collected, and shares information about her life. Through the footnotes, readers learn that the

⁶³ Baillie, *The Search for Heinrich Schlögel*, 20, 22; The Open Bar, "An Interview with Martha Baillie, author of *The Search for Heinrich Schlögel*," *The Open Bar* (Blog), August 25, 2014, accessed March 15, 2017, <http://www.tinhouse.com/blog/36231/an-interview-with-martha-baillie-author-of-the-search-for-heinrich-schlogel.html>; Note: Baillie makes clear in the Q&A that her narrator is female, a detail not included in the novel.

stereotypical characteristics used to connote archivists in fiction attributed to Baillie's narrator include an existence subsumed by her archival work, an inability to live in the outside world, and an obsessive need to uncover lost knowledge.⁶⁴

Baillie's archivist's obsession with discovering the truth about Schlögel began two years before her narration starts, and is such that she lacks interest in the problems of her own time and life.⁶⁵ The narrator discloses that she has ignored her own financial problems and the ecological crises and related protests taking place around her in Ontario, and that she began searching for Schlögel shortly after her parents died — suggesting that perhaps her obsession is a means of avoiding her own grief.⁶⁶ As a result of her desperation to uncover the “truth” of what happened, Baillie's archivist also becomes an unreliable narrator and should perhaps be deemed a ‘bad archivist’. She exhibits an awareness that delicate documents should not be subject to too much handling, and promises herself she will scan them.⁶⁷ Yet, thirty pages later she laments:

I go through the contents of this file frequently, doubtless more often than I should. Is my intention to destroy these documents through too much handling? I keep promising myself that I'll bring them to...work and discreetly scan them; then I fail to do so.⁶⁸

Upon considering whether to create a digital archive, the archivist oversimplifies digital preservation by suggesting that by creating digital copies of her records she will “render them eternal.”⁶⁹ She also becomes a creator of records in her collection by arranging and rearranging documents according to how they have meaning to her, adding whatever she deems “valid evidence” to her archive — including notes on her own dreams — and,

⁶⁴ Buckley, 102; Schmuland, 37-39.

⁶⁵ Baillie, *The Search for Heinrich Schlögel*, 21, 201-202,

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 38, 90, 151, 243, 250.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 81-82.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 50.

where documentation is lacking, imagining what may have happened and exaggerating what she already knows to fill in the gaps.⁷⁰ These descriptions of the narrator's 'archival work' emphasize that Baillie's archivist is not a professional archivist, but is a more stereotypical researching character.⁷¹

Although more satisfying as a researcher than as an archivist, Baillie's narrator points to new opportunities that the digital realm allows for archives in the twenty-first century. In her search for Heinrich Schlögel, the archivist places records relating to him on social media sites, and considers placing her whole archive online so that her records might reach a wider audience. She also hopes to receive additional information about the records from individuals who might recognize them online and have knowledge to share.⁷² In a footnote, Baillie's narrator points to an actual archival project called "Project Naming" that was initiated by Library and Archives Canada in 2001. It makes available online thousands of archival photographs depicting unidentified Inuit from the late 1800s to the mid-twentieth century so that they may now be described with information provided by the wider public.⁷³ In her description of "The Naming Project", as it is called in the novel, Baillie's narrator explains that naming the anonymous people in the photographs has now become urgent, as today's Inuit elders may be the last people able to identify them, and reveals that since the photographs have become accessible online they are being identified by the elders.⁷⁴ Baillie's reference to this project exemplifies her

⁷⁰ Ibid., 25, 81, 134, 201-202, 243. See Heather MacNeil, "Trusting Description: Authenticity, Accountability, and Archival Description Standards," *Journal of Archival Organization* 7 (2009): 89-107 for more on archival ethics and responsibility to protect the authenticity of records and document their custody, arrangement, creation and use.

⁷¹ Schmuland, 39-40.

⁷² Baillie, *The Search for Heinrich Schlögel*, 50, 267.

⁷³ Ibid., 270; "Project Naming," Library and Archives Canada, accessed March 17, 2017, <https://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/inuit/index-e.html>.

⁷⁴ Baillie, *The Search for Heinrich Schlögel*, 270.

focus on the intentionality of preserving as much of history as possible before it disappears, and also points to the new opportunities for making archival materials accessible to more people because of digital capabilities.

As well as narrating much of *The Search for Heinrich Schlögel* through the voice and perspective of an archivist character and exploring archival themes throughout her novel, Martha Baillie has also explored the link between archival records and telling the stories of history outside of her novel. While writing *The Search for Heinrich Schlögel*, Baillie created an accompanying online ‘Schlögel Archive’ which consists of postcards containing portions of the Heinrich’s story that were previously scattered across Canada, the United States, and Europe and then submitted to the online archive, audio readings of pieces of the novel by various people, and transcriptions of the novel that readers may enter from any point.⁷⁵ In 2015 Baillie created a related archives-structured visual art installation called *The Schlögel Archive* at the Koffler Gallery in Toronto, which exhibits the postcards onto which the author had previously transposed her novel, dispersed, and then borrowed back.⁷⁶ Artist and curator Malka Green observes, “By assembling her novel in postcards, Martha has us read the narrative in random segments, reflecting the disjointed manner in which stories may be remembered – especially those from the distant past.”⁷⁷

Baillie’s theme of collecting archival information that has been scattered or disjointed is parallel to the process by which her fictional archivist collects the scattered and fragmentary evidence of Schlögel’s existence, in hopes that she will be able to piece

⁷⁵ Martha Baillie, “Welcome to the Schlögel Archive,” The Schlögel Archive, April 2, 2014, accessed March 15, 2017, http://schlogel.ca/?page_id=1666.

⁷⁶ Koffler, “Erratics: Martha Baillie, Malka Greene with Alan Resnick,” Koffler Gallery, 2015, accessed March 15, 2017, <http://kofflerarts.org/exhibitions/2014/09/16/erratics/>.

⁷⁷ Malka Greene, “Mirror Images: Exploring Erratics.”

together enough of the whole story to understand his past. Baillie uses this illustration to point to the way that the histories of events, society, or individuals are known and have been pieced together through bits of historical record. The archivist in Baillie's novel collects what evidence she can, fills in the gaps with imagined details when she cannot find evidence, and admits that others might interpret another story about Heinrich based on the same evidence, all of which suggests that knowledge of history is not static.⁷⁸ Martha Baillie's *The Search for Heinrich Schlögel* set in "today's disappearing North" asks readers to reflect upon the Canadian past, yet exhibits the difficulty of understanding 'the whole picture' of history through her archivist-narrator's unsuccessful search for the past. Baillie's novel has been called an important work for asking readers "to consider our role in imagining the future into existence, while considering the consequences of our past choices."⁷⁹

Out of the Canadian novels found to include archivist characters and images of archives for this chapter, Aislinn Hunter's *The World Before Us* features the most positive depiction of an archivist character, and also informs readers of archival work and the archival landscape in an enlightening way. Schmuland noted in her 1999 article:

If the author believes that archival records have informational value, the author is more likely to present archives in a positive light. Those authors who do not see the usefulness of archives are the authors most likely to use negative stereotypes and images in reference to the aspects of archival work that they do discuss.⁸⁰

Not enough is known about the opinions of the other Canadian authors considered in this chapter to determine whether their sometimes negatively stereotypical depictions of archives and archival work are a result of their feelings about the usefulness of archives.

⁷⁸ Baillie, *The Search for Heinrich Schlögel*, 134; "The Search for Heinrich Schlögel by Martha Baillie," Tin House, accessed March 15, 2017, <http://www.tinhouse.com/store/product/the-search-for-heinrich-schl/>.

⁷⁹ "The Search for Heinrich Schlögel by Martha Baillie," Tin House.

⁸⁰ Schmuland, 52.

We *do know*, however, that Hunter has had great success in discovering valuable information in archives, has said wonderful things about archives, and even credited the inspiration for her novel to an individual that she discovered amongst archival records.⁸¹ In the Acknowledgements in her novel, Hunter thoughtfully and warmly thanked archives, libraries, and museums for keeping records and making them available to her, and thanked the archivist at the Bethlem Royal Hospital's Archives personally for providing "generous access" to the records that informed her novel.⁸² It is plausible that Hunter's positive depiction of archives and an archivist protagonist in *The World Before Us* may result from or reflect her own experiences using archival records, and that the stereotypes that Hunter happened to include were simply "groundwork for communication between the author and the reader."⁸³

Jane Standen, the fictional archivist protagonist in *The World Before Us*, is a graduate of the University College London's Archives and Records Management Master's program, which is an *actual* academic program. She wrote her MA thesis on archival practices in rural nineteenth-century asylums and, after a recommendation from a senior archivist at the special collections library where she interned, was employed as an archivist at the Chester Museum in London for 8 years.⁸⁴ Jane is made known to readers partially through unknown narrative voices, which assert that she is "a good archivist" and that she has a "willingness to navigate history, to consider its blank pages."⁸⁵ Some characterizations of Jane include those often attributed to archivist

⁸¹ Hunter, interview by Shelagh Rogers; consult the second chapter of this thesis for more on Hunter's uses of archives in writing her novel *The World Before Us*.

⁸² Hunter, "Acknowledgements" in *The World Before Us*, 416-417.

⁸³ Schmuland 45.

⁸⁴ Hunter, *The World Before Us*, 10, 48, 53, 261.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 33.

characters, including that her main role throughout the novel is to conduct research to solve a mystery. Since completing her thesis, Jane has been “drawn to the idea of what falls off the side of the page, what goes missing” and has been attempting to discover what happened to a woman called ‘N’ who went missing from an asylum in 1877, and for whom no records seem to exist.⁸⁶ These familiar characterizations also include Jane’s unsuccessful past attempts at love and social relationships and that she lives in and is afraid to let go of her personal past.⁸⁷

Although Jane has somewhat stereotypical problems for an archivist character, the context given to Hunter’s depictions of her unsuccessful relationships and inability to live in the present suggest that these are the fault of Jane’s past and its effect upon her throughout her life, rather than a direct result of her archival profession. Indeed, Jane realizes a quarter of the way through the novel that she has allowed the trauma of her past to perpetuate and consume her and is unsatisfied with her life, and manages to move on from her past.⁸⁸ Although similarities are apparent between the progression of archivist protagonists leaving the past behind in Swan’s *What Casanova Told Me* and Aislinn Hunter’s *The World Before Us*, an important difference is that Hunter’s Jane breaks free of her own past, rather than her identity as an archivist, and upon letting go of her past, delves into archival research, and determines to be intentional about her work.⁸⁹ Thus, Hunter manages the character development of her archivist-protagonist without compromising her character’s identity as an archivist.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 96.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 10, 132.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 130-132.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 181.

Two other archivists aside from Jane are depicted in Hunter's novel, one of whom is described as a woman about Jane's age (in her thirties) with cropped, dyed, blonde hair and a small diamond nose-ring, and another who graduated from the same program as Jane and thus shares associates and professors.⁹⁰ Neither of these fictional archivists correspond closely to archivist stereotypes, and are without noticeable or similar characteristics that denote their profession. Instead, Hunter's narrative voice maintains that, as a mark of their profession, archivists understand that "every scrap of information can carry within it tremendous value," and thus *The World Before Us* conveys a predominantly positive depiction of archivists throughout.⁹¹

Archival research, records, work, and themes in Hunter's novel are apparent throughout in recognizable and informative ways. Examples include Jane's visit to the local records office, where she is required to sign in, obtains a temporary pass, empties her things into a locker, and calls up files and boxes to a "bright but soulless reading room."⁹² She consults un-romanticized archival records, such as those of the Whitmore Hospital for Convalescent Lunatics, Commissioners' reports, admission books and records of transfer, the notes of a medical superintendent, casebooks, household account books and family records, and records on loan to the "Farrington Trust".⁹³ Jane is concerned with "the problem of the historical record" — the fact that parts of history are not recorded and leave gaps that cannot be filled except by imagination and speculation, and thus influence the way that we know history.⁹⁴ She acknowledges that creators of records might self-censor, or that executors of records might intervene by "tearing out

⁹⁰ Ibid., 253.

⁹¹ Ibid., 396, 253.

⁹² Ibid., 252-253.

⁹³ Ibid., 252-259, 380, 391-396.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 33, 66-67, 96, 114.

pages or burning whole books to expunge impassioned feelings, accidental indiscretions,” and thus change the historical record.⁹⁵ There is a reference to archival ethics when Jane admits that “she knows an archivist can’t reveal information about other patrons, but she asks anyway.”⁹⁶ Jane also shows proper professional concern about conservation and the impact of digitization of analogue records by observing that people seem “more content with looking at a jpeg...and less concerned with seeing the fragility and wear, the poignancy, of real things.”⁹⁷ Although these references to archives in *The World Before Us* are brief and perhaps not given much attention by non-archivist readers, they reveal information about archives, archival work, and archival concerns that are relevant to the archival world in the beginning of the twenty-first century. Rather than being stereotypical and simply a way to convey a quick impression to readers, they may improve readers’ views and understandings of archival work.

Archives and archival materials are shown in *The World Before Us* to have considerable influence over our understanding of the past, as Hunter simultaneously stresses the inadequacy of historical records, while also displaying their importance for understanding what we can of history. The unknown narrators of the novel have the historical knowledge that Jane seeks, including information that simply cannot be discovered because it was never recorded. At the end of the novel, these narrators spectate as Jane begins to write the history of the asylum that she discovered as a result of her research. She fills in the unrecorded gaps with imagined details, and the unknown

⁹⁵ Ibid., 386.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 313; “Code of Ethics,” Association of Canadian Archivists, accessed March 15, 2017, <http://archivists.ca/content/code-ethics>.

⁹⁷ Hunter, *The World Before Us*, 390; See Ala Rekrut, “Matters of Substance: Materiality and Meaning in Historical Records and their Digital Images,” *Archives and Manuscripts* 43, no. 3 (2014), for more on the loss of meaning that occurs when records are digitized.

narrators “laugh, because one of [them] knows she has it wrong.”⁹⁸ The archival theme in *The World Before Us* offers opportunities for readers to consider the complexity of historical records. By depicting archival records and research, Hunter reminds readers that history *can* be deciphered by searching through and making connections amongst records, while acknowledging that vast parts of the histories of individuals, places, or events have ‘gone missing’ over time, and will forever be unknown.

Concluding Thoughts About Images of Archivists in the Twenty-first Century

Aside from Hunter’s favourable and illuminating depiction of archives and an archivist protagonist in *The World Before Us*, my review of Canadian authored novels depicting archives or archivist characters over time and into the twenty-first century was not as positive as I expected it to be. Stereotypical or negative depictions of archivists and their work are still prevalent in the Canadian novels depicting archivist characters that I found to review for this chapter, which is indicative of a disconnect between the increasingly positive way that Canadian authors have spoken about archives in the recent past, as demonstrated in the second chapter of this thesis.

Of course, some positive observations *can* be made about the evolution of the archival image in Canadian fiction over time. Archivists are certainly more prominent in Canadian novels and, thanks to Marian Engel’s archivist protagonist in *Bear*, Canada can perhaps claim the first notable leading archivist character in a novel.⁹⁹ The archival image in fiction has moved in a positive way in Canadian novels, especially in those written since the beginning of the twenty-first century. In more recent Canadian novels, the archival profession and the work of archivists are also significantly more developed and

⁹⁸ Hunter, *The World Before Us*, 412.

⁹⁹ Taylor, review of *Bear*, 147.

given more meaning than in earlier fictional depictions of archives and archivists.

Authors of those novels have included mention of functions carried out by archivists, archival ethics, important archival projects that have been undertaken, and the importance of digital access, or the difficulties of digital preservation. The appearance of these topics points to a promising shift in archives-related novels, which seems to indicate authors' growing familiarity with and appreciation of archives. Hopefully these positive patterns will continue to appear in novels written by Canadian authors, as more informed depictions of archives and archivists can contribute to better public understanding of them.

Another element long present in the conversation about the way archives and archivists have been depicted, and subsequently perceived by society, is an acknowledgement that archivists have both the responsibility and the power to influence the way that society understands the archival profession. In response to the 1984 Archivists' Resource Allocators Report, the Society of American Archivists' Task force on Archives and Society pointed out: "Although resource allocators think they know what archives are, they are wrong. Unfortunately, archivists have not disabused them of their misconceptions."¹⁰⁰ This statement makes clear that in 1985, archivists were aware that they would have to find ways to disprove misconceptions about archives and influence the public's understanding about archives themselves. Later, studies on this topic also concluded by appealing to archivists to contemplate the effect that stereotypical or inaccurate depictions of archival work have upon their profession, and to find ways to actively counter those images by "popularizing their own images of the profession to

¹⁰⁰ Society of American Archivists' Task Force on Archives and Society, "Archivists' Resource Allocators: The Next Step," report summary to Society of American Archivists, 1985, 2, accessed March 15, 2017, <http://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/Image-of-Archivists-Levy1984.pdf>.

replace inaccurate or negative images,” or using their own power to “shape the stereotypes regarding the profession [into] something dynamic and relevant,” and thus take charge of the way that society, Hollywood, and authors view the archival profession.¹⁰¹

Meanwhile, archivists also encourage other archivists to consider how the public sees them, and to be agents for improving the archival image. In his closing plenary titled “As Others See Us: Archivists and Society” for the 2007 Association for Canadian Archivists Conference, Canadian archivist and Professor of Archival Studies, Terry Eastwood, spoke of the fact that archives often seem in the shadows or overlooked by society, and the need for archivists to engage with users and appeal to the general public so that people see and understand the importance of archival work.¹⁰² Even while acknowledging the worrying way that the public views archives, Eastwood encouraged archivists to “cultivate popular engagement; build appreciation; order services with users in mind; ... throw in a little geniality,” and to “seize moments of illumination when possible.”¹⁰³ Mark Greene made a similar appeal to his fellow archivists in his presidential address to the annual conference of the Society of American Archivists (SAA) in 2008:

All of us should demand, cajole, finagle, bargain, collect points, win friends, influence people, and in general do whatever it takes to build and exercise power for our programs. This is, of course, part of an overall goal of replacing the image of the lab-coated, dust-coated, withdrawn, and quiet archivist preciousizing over ‘old stuff’ in dead storage with an image (and self-image) of a confident, articulate, savvy professional.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Schmuland, 53; Buckley, 122-123; Aldred et al., 85-86.

¹⁰² Eastwood, “As Others See Us: Archivists and Society.”

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Mark Greene, 20.

An important recent example of how archivists are trying to portray themselves in new ways is, interestingly enough for this thesis, the SAAs' Archives Short Fiction Contest. The SAA Publications Board invited archivists in 2015 and 2016 to write short stories featuring archives, archivists, or archival materials. A panel of archivist-judges then rated submissions based on the writing, plot, and "archivalness."¹⁰⁵ They looked for a winning story that "says something meaningful about archives and is accessible to readers outside of the profession."¹⁰⁶ The winning stories and a selection of honourable mentions were published online — including winning or featured stories submitted by Canadian archivists.¹⁰⁷ These stories allow a fascinating look at how archivists would like to see their profession depicted, after decades of dissatisfaction with its portrayal in fiction.

The selection of stories published online includes narratives through personal and relatable archivist perspectives, insights into the positions of newly hired archivists filled with nerves and the will to prove themselves or newly graduated archivists with student debt and too few job postings to go around, commentary on the problem of the backlog, the importance of context, how to search databases and make connections amongst records, the functions of records processing, preservation, arrangement, or records description, and many demonstrate the human factors of archiving, such as tough

¹⁰⁵ Society of American Archivists, "Winner of the 2016 Archives Short Fiction Contest!" 2016 Archives Short Fiction Contest, last modified January 9, 2017, accessed March 14, 2017, <http://www2.archivists.org/2016-fiction-contest>; Society of American Archivists, "Winner of the Archives Short Fiction Contest," 2015 Archives Short Fiction Contest, last modified December 20, 2016, accessed March 14, 2017, <http://www2.archivists.org/news/2015/winner-of-the-archives-short-fiction-contest>;

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.; Stephanie Vaillant, cataloguing and digitization archivist for the Stratford Festival Archives in Ontario, Canada, won the 2015 contest with her short story "A Silent Promise." Accessed March 16, 2017, <http://www2.archivists.org/node/20283>; Laura Millar, a records management and archives consultant from British Columbia, received honorable mention in the 2015 contest for her short story "Principles of Provenance." Accessed March 16, 2017, <http://www2.archivists.org/node/20285>.

decisions about appraisal, destruction, providing access, or archival ethics. Many of the stories are heart-warming, and end poignantly or emotionally with archivists' presentation of meaningful records to researchers, the discovery of previously lost memories, or the preservation of records of underrepresented groups in archives. Many of the short stories featured through the contest communicate realities of archival work, and are accessible and relatable to both archivist readers and readers outside of the profession.

Notably, few prominent or unforgettable descriptions of archivist characters appear in these stories written by archivists; there is little feeling that authors have attempted to compensate for negative stereotypes about archives and archivists with specifically positive imagery, nor have they fallen back on stereotypical images to make their archivist characters easily recognizable. Themes that come across most strongly in the selection of stories made available are that archivists are sympathetic and relatable characters — as well as professionals and academics — that archivists interact well with researchers, donors, and the public, and enjoy their work, and that the authors (or the judges, in their selection of winning stories) emphasized the importance of the people represented in, and who come into contact with, archival records.

The SAA's short fiction contest is an example of how the archival profession is attempting to influence the perceptions of archivists. Archivists continue to do so at archival conferences, in blogs, and by encouraging archivists to be better at presenting what they do in their daily interactions with archival users — and even by turning lightheartedly to another literary form – haiku.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ In 2009 and 2011 the Society of American Archivists invited its members to present submissions to “Archival Haiku” contests. Archival haiku were first presented in the conference session “Archives After Hours: The Light, Literary, and Lascivious Side of Archives” at the Joint Annual Meeting of the Society of American Archivists and the Council of State Archives in Austin, Texas, 2009. “Archival Haiku 2011,”

Although the review of Canadian novels containing archivist characters in this chapter does not confirm the complete shift in portrayals of them hoped for upon beginning this project, or the ones that archivists would probably prefer to see, there is evidence of movement towards more positive depictions of the archival profession. Aislinn Hunter's positive portrayal of an archivist and public response to archives upon researching for her novel are promising indications that, as more authors understand and appreciate archives as both users of them and donors to them, more positive depictions of them will also be featured in literary work. Archivists' continuing preoccupation with the way they would like society to understand and value archives, and their recent agency in presenting themselves in positive ways that inform and are accessible to the public are also hopeful signs. Archivists must continue to "seize moments of illumination."¹⁰⁹ Engagement by archivists with literary figures and their work is an immensely important means of aiding this purpose, given the centrality of literature in societal life.

Society of American Archivists, last modified September 7, 2011, accessed March 18, 2017, <http://www2.archivists.org/news/2011/archival-haiku-2011>. See *ibid.*, "Archival Haiku", p. 16, for one submission entered by Kathie Johnson, archivist at the University of Louisville, that catches the flavour:

Little old lady with bun
Archivist stereotype
Not this wild woman

¹⁰⁹ Eastwood, "As Others See Us: Archivists and Society."

Conclusion

Literary works often enjoy a wide readership and great acclaim. Because of the public influence they may have, archivists are concerned with the image of archives and archivists in those works, and the relationship between archives and authors of fiction. Archives, which often exist outside of the general public's notice, come to the fore through the ways in which they intersect with literature. By placing the relationship between Canadian archives and Canadian literature in its historical context, and exploring the ways in which the records of the Canadian literary world have been preserved and Canadian literary figures have used archives — either in doing research for novels or as plot devices within works of fiction — this thesis demonstrates important intersections of Canadian archives and fiction.

The chapters of this thesis outline the burgeoning relationships between Canadian archives and Canadian literature in three contexts: archival collection of literary records for posterity; the uses of archival records by authors of historical fiction in their work; and the portrayal of archives and archivists in Canadian authored fiction. Each chapter explores an aspect of the connection between Canadian literature and archives that has not been considered much: the influential role that archives play in the creation of literary works; the preservation of the records of literary activity; and how Canadian authors can affect the public's awareness and understanding of archives through their portrayals of archives and archivists in novels.

The rise of literary archives in Canada accompanied the sudden flourishing of Canadian literature in the mid-twentieth century and equally sudden demand from scholars and other researchers for access to the records created by the literary world.

Canadian public and university archives played a significant role in meeting those demands and facilitating the study of literature in Canada. Early literary archives contributed to the prominence of Canadian literature and literary studies by expending grant money and much effort and attention on pursuing the records of literary figures and describing those records in great detail to make them accessible to researchers. Those early efforts shaped the study of Canadian literature.

The maturation of Canadian literature in the latter decades of the twentieth century was marked by the flowering of historical fiction, and to ever broader uses of archival records by its Canadian authors. This connection between Canadian authors and both Canadian and other archives is doubly significant. Authors have said that archives are instrumental in writing historical fiction, as archival records provide details about the past that typically cannot be found in secondary historical sources. This allows for more convincing and accurate representations of the past. Canadian fiction writers' uses of archives have helped them write highly acclaimed and widely read historical fiction. Those authors have praised archives and archivists for preserving the past and disseminating archival information to readers and public audiences around the globe. Authors' consistent acknowledgement of the key role archives play in the development of their novels can only be invaluable in increasing the public visibility and level of interest in archives.

Although many Canadian authors have given very positive reviews of their experiences using archival records and interacting with archivists, portrayals of archives and archivists in fiction have not consistently reflected these positive experiences. A survey in this thesis of major Canadian fictional works written since the 1970s and

featuring archivist characters concluded with the unfortunate realization that, rather than depicting them as having the range of human virtues and limitations, many authors have seen them as largely one-dimensional or as flawed in ways that often make them unappealing. These depictions have thus perpetuated stereotypical images of archives. On a positive note, more informed and accurate representations of archivist characters and archival work appear in more recent Canadian renderings of the archival image, most notably in the 2014 novel *The World Before Us* by Aislinn Hunter. Hunter has shared publicly her positive experience in discovering archival records that inspired her novel and her appreciation for archives and archivists. Archivists can only hope that Hunter's characterization of Jane Standen, the archivist protagonist of her novel, bodes well for future fictional representations of archives.

This does not mean that authors should deal uncritically with archives and archivists. It does mean, however, that long running easy stereotypes should be questioned and more accurate portrayals sought. Indeed, if novelists delve deeper into the complexities and challenges of actual archival work, they may make Canadian novels even *more* interesting.

The relationship between archives and literature is a key way that archives have become more visible since the beginning of the twenty-first century. The endeavours of both authors and archivists have the capability to influence the work of the other, and both have significant potential to influence society and to *be* influenced by society. More attention should be drawn to the already positive ways that the two intersect, and the relationship between archives and literature, in Canada and elsewhere, should be highlighted for the benefit of both.

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