



CPYRGHT

by CURTIS CARROLL DAVIS

*SPEAK TO ME SOFTLY:*

THE  
PERMANENT  
FASCINATIONS  
OF  
THE  
SPY  
STORY

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agents has, from the close of World War II, reached a new height. Since most people never meet secret agents, or never recognize them when they do, much of this interest finds play in the memoirs a few of them have published, or—for a far larger audience—in fiction woven 'round the espionage theme. Most readers are unaware that this theme caught the imagination of American writers so long ago, and has been pursued in such varying genres, that to talk of "spy stories" is to be much too restrictive. "Espionage literature" would be a better phrase.

In Chicago not long ago, the president of Republic Steel ruefully assured a gathering of business leaders that "the average layman would rather read a mystery story about a vanishing spy than a book about the vanishing purchasing power of his dollars." The president was doubtless right; the signs would indicate that amateur interest in the activities of secret

The figure of the secret agent appeared in our native writing at its very outset. Captain John Smith, in the little pamphlet about the settling of Virginia which he called *A True Relation . . .* and published at London in 1608, told how the Emperor Powhatan had assigned to one of his braves, an Indian named Amocis, a mission to mingle and live with the whites just in order to observe their activities and