

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: AGENTS AND ACTORS ALIKE: ON THE
 HIDDEN THEATRE OF ESPIONAGE

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This PhD dissertation analyzes espionage as a form of theatre and performance. Using archival documents, comparative analysis of theatre and espionage case-studies, and the application of critical theory, espionage is revealed to be a theatrical endeavor. It is a paramount example of a phenomenon which exists at the intersection of where art and life are blurred. One that gives urgency to an understanding of how theatre may be viewed outside of its traditional framing. This study of espionage is an undertaking that delves into a history of clandestine performances ranging from Mata Hari, James O'Keefe, Virginia Hall, Kim Philby, Maria Butina, and even theatre practitioner Augusto Boal. The project explores how espionage: is defined by a dialectic of success and failure, has mirrored actor training in the preparing of agents, is reliant on the archive for its execution, is governed by a desire to control, and can be viewed as a form of theatre.

AGENTS AND ACTORS ALIKE: ON THE HIDDEN THEATRE OF
ESPIONAGE

by

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Preface

In a sense, this project began with a play I performed in during the 2006 summer season at the 4th Line Theatre in Millbrook, Ontario, and with a series of conversations with faculty at Aberystwyth University in Wales. I was interested in trying to find a profession that was irrefutably a form of theatre and performance, and that was also held in wide regard by the public. After moving to Amsterdam I proposed the PhD project to the Department of Theatre Studies, where Professor Jan Lazardzig helped guide its conceptualization. With his insightful suggestions, the project began to take shape. Following an unexpected invitation from Professor James Harding at the University of Maryland to move to College Park, and with the support of Professor Lazardzig, the project was relocated to the United States where it developed into the dissertation that is presented here. Though I am less inclined to think that espionage should be held in high regard, I still believe that it is irrefutably a form of theatre and performance.

Dedication

For my parents Donalda and Bill.

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my wife Sima Sheybani, my parents Donalda and Bill, and my siblings Kathleen and Stuart. From listening as I read passages aloud and offering feedback, to visiting me in far-flung reaches of the world, your support, outside perspectives, and, yes, patience, has helped me complete this journey. To my supervisor Professor James Harding, thank you for the guidance, scholarly wisdom, academic rigor, humor, and chats that have made this project what it is. To Professor Jan Lazardzig at the Freie Universität Berlin, I am indebted. My initial conceptualization of the project was guided by his thoughtful and insightful reflections, as well as his support after transferring to Maryland. The faculty and staff of the School of Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies also deserve heartfelt thanks for the opportunity to learn from them, to be a part of their community, and for the assistance each of them offered me on this journey. I am particularly thankful for the support given by Brian MacDevitt, Leigh Smiley, Frank Hildy and the International Program for Creative Collaboration and Research for supporting my artistic work and research at the University of Maryland. Special thanks to Crystal Gaston and the late Sandy Jackson, whose steady hands helped me navigate the often-times confusing paperwork for international graduate students. To my friends and colleagues in Maryland and beyond, I thank you for the uncompromising debates, the evenings of laughter, the sharing of food, the assistance in translations, and the support to pursue scholastic interests. While there are many to name, I would specifically like to mention

Alec Hughes and Lisa Butler in the UK for their ongoing encouragement of my research and supporting my move to Maryland while we run a theatre company; Twan Schenkles and Charlotte Mayenburg in The Netherlands for the support from afar, laughter over telephone calls, and a place to land when travelling to conferences; and Victoria Scrimmer, Kioumars Haeri, Kelley Holley, Allison Hedges and Paul Deziel for their collegiality and solidarity. To my family across Canada and around the world, thank you for keeping me humble, as well as reminding me of my rural roots along with the diversity of perspectives and beliefs in the world. And finally, to the Congregation of Grace Saint Andrews United Church in Arnprior, Ontario, thank you for the use of the office space throughout the months of 2021. I cannot adequately express how helpful it was to have a place to concentrate and finish my writing.

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List of Abbreviations

CIA – Central Intelligence Agency

CSIS – Canadian Security and Intelligence Service

KGB – Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti (trans. Committee for State Security)

MI5 – Military Intelligence, Section 5 (Security Service)

NSA – National Security Agency

NKVD - Naródnyy komissariát vnútrennikh del (trans. People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs)

ISA – Ideological State Apparatus

RSA – Repressive State Apparatus

SIS – Secret Intelligence Service (MI6)

SIG – Special Investigation Group

SOE –Special Operations Executive

Introduction - Finding the Hidden and Its Reflection

This dissertation analyzes espionage as theatre and performance. Structurally the project is divided into four chapters with the following subjects: successful espionage and Applied Theatre, the appropriation of theatre training by espionage agencies, the archive as a methodological issue, and failed espionage seen within the dialectic of success and failure. Thematically the project is predominantly oriented in two ways. The first and last chapter are a mirroring of each other and are concerned with the topics of success and failure along with their dialectical nature within espionage, and theatre and performance. Both chapters draw on case studies to tease out this fundamental aspect of clandestine work. Chapters two and three are concerned with the archive. Chapter two utilizes the archive to explore espionage training as a form of theatre training, while chapter three explores the challenges of accessing the archive and the role the archive has in the production of espionage as performance event. Overall the project illustrates that when espionage is thought of as an endeavor in theatre and performance the complexities and hidden aspects of espionage can be teased out and scrutinized.

The idea of mirroring, as it relates to artistic practices being a reflection of the world, is not a new concept and there may be no more impactful an idea in the Western world than the Ancient Greek concept of mimesis. In her efforts to bring a feminist lens to the notion of mimesis, Elin Diamond

identifies two predominant understandings of the term: “One, mimesis as representation, with its many doublings and unravelings of model, subject, identity (Irigaray, Derrida). Two, mimesis as a mode of reading that transforms an object into a gestus or a dialectical image (Brecht, Benjamin).”¹ While this project began as an exploration entirely within the first conceptualization of mimesis, the Benjamin/Brecht manner of approach has allowed for the analysis of the subjects of success and failure. Mirrors (and at its core mimesis) offer us a way of understanding representation and remind us that representation not only implies an audience, i.e. that it is for someone, but also that representation is always one step removed from presence itself. Thus, representation is neither identical with, or perfect in, its replication of that which it represents. The idea of a mirror is brought up in a more in depth manner in Chapter 4, but as a reflection of the larger project (forgive the pun) mirrors allow for the contrasting of cases; the exposure of dialectics including failure and success as well as Truth and Untruth; the reading of performance; and, in line with Diamond’s proposal of the “manipulating of the mirror”, the juxtaposition of seemingly unrelated concepts and phenomena.²

Yet the notion of mirrors and mirroring only frames a portion of the project. The archive also plays a central role in the production of espionage as well as any sort of research on the subject. The introduction to chapter three addresses the challenge of accessing the archive as both a scholar and

¹ Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis* (London, UK: Routledge, 1997), ii.

² Diamond, ii.

as an agent of espionage. One of the reasons that such challenges exist is that archives of espionage are built from the intelligence practices and intel collected from these clandestine operations. This means that even when created from historical intelligence the archives of espionage act as an echo of previous events and activities—effectively a ghosting of the past performances. Furthermore, the fundamental nature of espionage is that it is a secretive practice. To desire access to that which is secret sets up a conflict, which Sissela Bok notes are “conflicts over power: the power that comes through controlling information.”³ Information is power, and to lose control over information is to lose power. What this means for scholarship about espionage is that academic investigations of archives containing intelligence work challenge the control of agencies bent on maintaining their secrecy and power. It also changes the way we think of the academic research and its relationship with power production.

One final concept that is integral to the analysis of espionage as theatre and performance is Louis Althusser’s work on ideology. Intelligence practices are governed by ideology. And espionage is most often understood to be an extension of the state. With the blurring of divisions between nations and corporations we might also view corporate espionage as an extension of the state. In his essay “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus”, Louis Althusser implores his readers to consider the driving force behind state

³ Sissela Bok, *Secrets: On the Ethics of Concealment and Revelation* (New York, USA: Vintage Books, 1984), 19.

control and domination. When the concept of 'state control' is being utilized, it is an incorporation of all contexts of state hegemony and is not limited to the idea of nationhood. This perspective is concerned with any power structure that can control or influence the existence of people. Thus, it would be possible to include a broad range of institutions. The initial suggestion put forward by Althusser is that such power and dominance evolves out of "the reproduction of the conditions of production."⁴ A strong case can be made that espionage is a tactic that is not only used to reproduce the production of state power, but to also assert the power of a state where it does not currently exist, such as the United States in the Middle East through the CIA. Espionage, it could be reasoned, is the gathering of intel by a state, which is then used to ward off any threat to the cycle of domination and control.

If we invoke any instance of espionage practice we can see a 'state' looking to exercise control. Althusser explains that there is a two-step process to such the production of control, "1. The productive forces, 2. The existing relations of Production."⁵ He also defines the State as the "machine of repression which enables the ruling classes (in the nineteenth century the bourgeois class and the 'class' of big landowners) to ensure their domination over the working class, thus enabling the former to subject the latter to the process of surplus-value extortion."⁶ The state engages the 'productive forces'

⁴ Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and other essays*, trans. Ben Brewster, (New York, USA: Monthly Review Press, 2001), 85.

⁵ Althusser, 86

through its institutions, which include the police, the justice system, the military, the administration, and more. In Althusser's formulation, these institutions are bound together under the concept of Repressive State Apparatus. In the modern era, these institutions or 'production houses' (to borrow a term from theatre) are often associated with espionage. They seek to gain information to preserve their role in society. Following the ideas proposed by Althusser, it can establish that espionage is a tool for the reproduction of power.

The cleverness of Althusser's cyclical explanation of state control is that it not only answers part of the question of what espionage is, but it also gives us an answer as to why espionage takes place. It is for the reproduction of control. Intriguingly, if espionage—often thought of as Repressive State Apparatus—is thought of as theatre practice, which is more often thought of in terms of Ideological State Apparatus, we then see a blurring between these two mechanism in the power production that Althusser is describing. In other words, espionage exists somewhere between RSA and ISA's, and perhaps within both categories. This is made clear by the ideology that often drives espionage. Espionage as a tool of power has been utilized throughout history and across the world. With this contextualization, along with an investigation of the archive, and the notion of mirroring, this project attempts to tackle the work of espionage as a closed-off practice that can be accessed through a theatre and performance analysis.

⁶ Althusser, 92.

Overview: From Success to Failure

Chapter one focuses on the idea of success within espionage.

Separated into two sections, the chapter begins with an analysis of a historical case-study detailing a performance of Invisible Theatre, a practice conceived of and developed by Brazilian practitioner Augusto Boal. Through this case study, a comparison is drawn between Boal's theories and practice, and the efforts of modern-day activists like James O'Keefe, and intelligence agencies. Focusing on the shared deception in these practices, the chapter investigates the ethical dilemmas brought forward by these theatrical engagements, and the dubious rationalization that is used to justify the work.

Moving forward, the chapter transitions to a broad overview of Applied Theatre, tackling some of the fundamental theories and principles of the practice with the aim of establishing the conditions of analyzing applied theatre engagements. Beyond the mutual interest in stimulating change, there are three aspects shared by espionage and Invisible Theatre. These are the planning of action and pre-establish goals, the need for flexibility and adaptation towards new circumstances that befall the performers, and tight control of the objectives. At the core of both espionage and Invisible Theatre is the idea of intervention, that an entity, whether a person or institution, must and can intervene in events taking place. Moreover, while there is a myth that Applied Theatre is rooted in left-wing traditions, and thus assumed by some to have democratizing principles at its core, this is not true. Like espionage,

Applied Theatre is merely a tool for the facilitation of whatever agenda is being undertaken.

Necessary for this project, that chapter pivots to an exploration of theories and scholarship related to espionage as a form of theatre. This is accomplished by invoking Sarah K. Schneider's work on undercover practices and her concept of "identity artists," which was developed by Schneider to gain a footing in how theatre is employed by undercover operators.⁷

Interweaving Schneider's work with Laura Levin's ideas on camouflage and the "art of blending in,"⁸ the chapter also cites Richard Schechner's concept of "dark play"⁹ to illustrate how espionage intersects with performance. A subsequent exploration of how the concepts of explicit and indirect deception augment these performance practices, allows for these ideas to be further interrogated. True to the theme of mirroring, the first half of chapter one puts these theatre and performance practices in dialogue with the concept of mimesis, highlighting the notion that these representations are "for someone, and not only a representation of something else."¹⁰ With these principles

⁷ Sara K. Schneider, *Art of Darkness: Ingenious Performances by Undercover Operators, Con Men, and Others* (Chicago, USA: Cuneiform Books, 2008), 4.

⁸ Laura Levin, *Performing Ground: Space, Camouflage and the Art of Blending In* (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 37.

⁹ Richard Schechner. *Performance Studies: An Introduction*. 2nd ed. (London, UK: Routledge, 2002), 119.

¹⁰ Matthew Potolsky, *Mimesis* (New York, USA: Routledge, 2006), 74.

established the chapter moves to analyzing these ideas in a practical setting, which is accomplished via historical analysis.

The case study of Virginia Hall, who was arguably the most successful United States spy of the Second World War, is the final portion of the chapter. The case-study analysis employs Phillip Taylor's three characteristics of Applied Theatre to assess outcomes. These are: people, passion, and platform. Following Taylor's ideas on Applied Theatre, the chapter argues that evaluations are a necessary aspect of determining which Applied Theatre events are most successful. Exploring the success of Virginia Hall's efforts in WWII, the chapter identifies the desired outcomes from both the perspective of Hall herself, and the larger outcomes desired by the Special Operations Executive of the British Government, which Hall was working for at the time. The work of Hall and the outcomes are then put in dialogue with the generic goals and attributes of Applied Theatre identified earlier in the chapter. As a supplemental to the focus on Hall's espionage work, the chapter explores the efforts of the Vichy and Nazi governments to undermine Hall's clandestine initiatives, which acted a counterpoint to Hall, and by extension the SOE's, success. The chapter concludes with a brief review of the goals laid out at the beginning of the project and draws linkages between espionage and theatre.

Chapter two provides analysis of the training methods employed by espionage agencies, with focus placed on the efforts of the SOE during World War Two. The first half of the chapter is dedicated to the development of theatre training methods in the lead up to the Second World War. After briefly

reviewing the established tenants of espionage identified in chapter one, the term cultural camouflage is proposed as a term for the conscious engagement and tactic of spies in their undercover work. This necessary intervention is meant to aid in clarifying why clandestine agents require training to blend in with societies. Following this, the chapter engages with training methods established by the SOE, and moves into a historical overview of the Special Training Schools. Of most relevance were the finishing schools, which housed specialists for instruction of specific clandestine tactics. Among the instructors was the actor Peter Folis, whose teaching focused on camouflage, disguises, and character back stories. Additionally, the chapter identifies pedagogical training methods to understand how information was disseminated and to what end. Of note is the use of anecdotes by the instructors, and a series of training manuals drafted by the SOE to aid in broad, as well as country-specific, instruction. Repeated routinely throughout the training manuals is various theatre terminology, which demands an exploration of the training methods of acting that were developed in the lead-up to World War Two.

Transitioning to training methods, the chapter narrows in on four practitioners working in the United Kingdom, or whose work was being widely disseminated in Great Britain, during the 1930's. Specifically, the chapter is concerned with realistic and naturalistic forms of acting. While there are many practitioners who could be considered for this study, attention is placed on Konstantin Stanislavsky, Michael Chekhov, Michel Saint-Denis and Joan

Littlewood. Beginning with Stanislavsky, the central tenants identified in his work that relate to the training methods potentially appropriated by espionage instructors include his use of narrative, manual-writing, and Socratic technique. Shifting to Michael Chekhov, the chapter narrows in on his interest in the psychological gesture, atmosphere, and emphasis on physical training. The third instructor given focus in chapter two, Michel Saint-Denis, has had far-reaching influence in matters of theatre training. His legacy is indebted to Jacques Copeau, and Saint-Denis' work is partly defined by his pursuit of a holistic style of performance training, which aligns well with the efforts of the SOE. This is also true of Saint-Denis' interest in an evolving method of instruction, in addition to courses on language, movement, and improvisation. Joan Littlewood is positioned as the fourth acting pedagogue within the chapter. While her inclusion may seem strange, since her company 'The Theatre Workshop' did not exist until after World War Two, Littlewood was already exploring training methods for actors in the 1930's through the interdisciplinary group Theatre Union.¹¹ Like Saint-Denis, Littlewood did not have strong interest in establishing a singular form of instruction or actor training. Her system was also constantly evolving. Perhaps more than the other three she was most interested in a breadth of global practices, which informed her work.

¹¹ Nadine Holdsworth, *Joan Littlewood* (London, UK: Routledge, 2018), 8.

After tracing through four approaches to actor training developed in the years leading to the Second World War, the chapter shifts back to the training manuals written by the SOE and engages in a close reading of the text. This effort is tied together with an analysis of mimesis, camouflage, and explorations of role-play. Alongside this effort is a comparison between the training manuals of the SOE and Stanislavsky's instruction on actor training. Attention is paid to Stanislavsky's notion of the psychophysical, the immediacy of performance, communication, the method of physical actions, and active analysis. These concepts are then contrasted with terms cited by the SOE that include Identity, History, Documents, Clothes and Effects, Change of Appearance, and Final Search, to establish the commonalities of the training regimes in both theatre and Allied espionage of WWII.

Moving away from a practical exploration of the archive and instead looking towards the methodological challenges presented by the archive, chapter three begins with a reflection on accessing archives and is informed by the research that was used in the writing of chapter two. Central to this analysis is the position that archives are gated institutions with built-in gate-keeping strategies that mediate the flow of information. There might be no better a metaphor for this than the decorative pond, reminiscent of a moat, that has been built around The National Archives, Kew, in London, where much of the archival information cited in this project was obtained. From the practical issues of access, the chapter narrows in on why such gate-keeping strategies have been established, who enforces them, and how they have

been bypassed. Beginning with the molehunt initiated by senior CIA agent James Jesus Angleton, the chapter transitions to the work of Kim Philby and his effort in raiding the archive of western nations to share with the Soviet Union. Tied to Diana Taylor's archive and the repertoire, Philby's work to access the archive serves as an entry point into understanding how espionage disrupts, exploits, and enables the archive as both physical repository and theorized aspect of performance.

From Philby's work for the British SIS, chapter three moves into an analysis of 'the archive' within performance and places it alongside the definitions of espionage cited in both chapters one and two. Of utmost importance are the various specialization of intelligence professionals identified by Michael Andregg. Threading in Taylor's theories, the conclusion is drawn that each of the individuals identified by Andregg are performing a role and thus engaging with the archive and the repertoire. As the case-study of Philby indicates, the gate-keeping of the archive is central to the efforts at the core of espionage practices. Philby, in many ways, was the gate-keeper of the archive for the British SIS in Spain during WWII. Furthermore, Philby's efforts definitively show how the overlap between various intelligence roles can exist and be exploited, affecting the archive of espionage documents, and the archive inherent to these clandestine performances.

By using a smaller case-study described by Philby to author Phillip Knightley, chapter three explores the role that the archive has in the execution of espionage work. The described assassination attempt setup by

Philby that was called off by senior members of the SIS, in turn sets off a chain-reaction of events that led to Philby's exploiting the archive to inform the Soviet Union of British military efforts. Secrecy is central to this work and helps govern the archive of espionage. As noted, secrecy is defined by the ideas of control and power, and closely tied to identity. Philby, through his acts of secrecy tied to his hidden identity, exploits these secretive practices resulting in altered performances due to the manipulation of the archive. Further analysis of Philby's work occurs by considering how secrecy itself is a performative undertaking, one that is reliant on both an accessing of the archive and a prevention of others from accessing it. Wrapped up in the larger case-study of Philby are his multiple and co-existing performances as 'loyal British Agent' and 'Soviet Operative', which allow him to simultaneously access archives to share intel, and also alter archives to produce alternative performances. In essence, Philby's performance is produced out of the archive and repertoire, which is used to raid a secondary archive, to provide materials to a third archive. To illuminate how a corruption of the archive can affect future performances, the chapter invokes the narrative of WWII Operation Mincemeat executed by the Allied Forces. A famous moment of deception where a body with false invasion plans attached to it was placed in the ocean off the coast of Spain to create a ruse in which the Axis forces were misled about an imminent invasion. The misdirection contained in this effort led the Axis forces to believe that an invasion of Greece was in the near future, distracting from the actual plan to invade through Sicily. In placing this

alongside the efforts of Philby, the chapter also considers the role of 'truth' within the context of archives, performance, and espionage. Drawn from this study is the conclusion that 'truth' and 'untruth' are subjective to the contexts in which they take place, and the mode of analysis in which Truth is sought.

Shifting the focus from Philby, the second half of chapter three invokes contemporary espionage practices to understand how the methodological challenge of the archive continues to exist in the digital age. This is accomplished by putting the case-study of Philby in dialogue with the ongoing issues surrounding the company Huawei, which has been repeatedly accused of being a vessel for Chinese state intelligence. By considering Laura Levin's proposal of camouflage as performance practice, digital espionage might be seen as manifesting as literal infrastructure. Following this, espionage fulfills the criteria of embeddedness and in many regards utilizes camouflage as a performative strategy to remain hidden. The site or location for the undercover performance of espionage is no longer a physical site but perhaps a web-site, which gleans information in real-time. Or the very infrastructure allowing individuals to access the internet, siphoning off information surreptitiously. However, unlike analogue espionage, digital espionage is definable as a high speed, insidious, delocalized iteration of spy-work. These new methods of infiltration and clandestine undertakings are further contextualized by the blurring of lines between corporations and governments, as well as necessary services and backdoor access to personal information.

The last section of chapter three addresses the motivations behind corporate and government espionage in the digital age. Big Data and Dataveillance become the focus of research by returning to the position that power and control are the base motivation of espionage, and that control of the archive is the paramount form of institutional domination. Archives of institutions and citizens have become monetized to the extent that corporations raid the archive to generate profit, other companies protect that data for a profit, and certain corporations enable forms of systemic discrimination through the act of online-steering via their selling of archival information. Here the project again aligns with Althusser's formulation of Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses. To conclude, the chapter focuses on efforts that have been developed to circumvent digital espionage and online steering and make use of counter-espionage practices in a form of theatre meant to undermine artificial intelligence and algorithms.

As chapter one focused on the success of espionage, in true mirroring fashion chapter four pays attention to the failures of espionage. Beginning with a review of the convicted WWI Dutch spy Mata Hari, the chapter explores the concepts of failure and success to expose their dualistic nature. More specifically, the chapter looks to expose the dialectic of success and failure that is at the crux of espionage, as well as theatre and performance. Working through the execution of Mata Hari, the project identifies instances that can be read as both successes and failures. Mata Hari is far from the only woman whose story of espionage has condemned her to infamy. The position put

forward is that espionage exploits these discriminatory tropes to succeed. This in itself is an exploitation of failure—a sort of moral failing governed by a misogynistic framing—that enables espionage. This framing can be extended to Mata Hari and her role as a mother, dancer, and prostitute, all used to justify her execution. Failure in turn is extended beyond the character of Mata Hari to the physical events of the execution, which echoes Dwight Conquergood's essay on lethal theatre. The actions of both the execution squad and Mata Hari herself can be read as instances of failure and success, yet again gesturing to the dialectic under investigation.

The lens of failure then shifts to the espionage events that Mata Hari took part in, which eventually led to her arrest. Here the blurring of success and failure is further analyzed. Phillip Knightley's suggestion that espionage is reliant on a lack of acknowledgement of successes and failures is easily identified and aids in the analysis. The assertion is that espionage bureaus have developed a strong ability to conjure up success out of nothing and perpetuate a state of action and self-justification, and that these justifications are rooted in a sort of theatrically based persuasion. This, like in previous chapters, is evocative of Althusser's RSA-ISA formulation, and echoes the suggestion made by numerous scholars that Mata Hari was not only insignificant in her efforts as a spy, but that her capture was exploited by both the French and Germans to justify and enable their war-time efforts. The position put forward from here is that espionage possesses a self-justifying (re)generational ability to create success out of failure and failure out of

success.

To interrogate these concepts further, chapter four turns to Elinor Fuchs's *Death of Character* to identify how contemporary theatre has found life by shifting the central focus of production away from 'character'. Tying Fuchs's position back to Mata Hari lends credence to the idea that spies who are caught experience the death of character, often in multiple ways.

Furthermore, by analyzing espionage alongside the death of character, the death of a clandestine operative's character is not only seen as signifying the destruction of who they represent, but also the individual qualities of such a persona. This may be extended to the idea of terminating the archive associated with the performance undertaken by the agent. Through an invocation of Fuchs, the research places espionage within the framework of what is now most often referred to as post-dramatic theatre. This, along with the focus of failure, aligns with Sarah Jane Bailes' work on the poetics of failure, in which she investigates the failure of representation. Chapter four extends Bailes' ideas further to a simultaneous investigation of representations that fail.

Drawing the topics of failure and espionage into the 21st century again, the chapter moves to a new case-study on Maria Butina, the Russian citizen who was charged with failing to register as a foreign agent and ultimately deported back to Russia in 2019. Situating Butina as the mirror image of Mata Hari, the project advances the exploration of the dialectic of success and failure forward by one century to understand how these two concepts

manifest in espionage during the post-modern era. Most revealing is the trial of Butina, which, like Hari's execution, is rife with theatricality. As is identified, the efforts by the United States government amount to an initiative of character killing (to borrow from Fuchs). These instances of character assassination reveal the United States orientalist approach to foreigners, as well as its traditionalist understandings of relationships, used to undermine the credibility of Butina. In line with the (re)generative abilities of espionage, intelligence agencies capitalize on both success and failure. The chapter breaks down instances from the Butina trial to establish how both the Russian and United States governments might find success in the failure of the other nation. Additionally, the court-room proceedings against Butina are framed by Bailes' work on the failure of representation, particularly when they are concerned with the various characters that espionage agents employ. As a final area of analysis, the chapter explores how the multiplicity of characters that are found within espionage, especially when considering the dialectic of failure and success, render the espionage agent a *tabula rasa*—an empty canvas on which people conducting espionage and counter-espionage create character. Indeed, those engaging in this work often have their very being playing host to more than one character at a time. Althusser's work is again invoked in the conclusion to illustrates how the concepts explored in chapter four align with the notion of state domination and control, in this instance through a dialectic of success and failure.

With the path forward established, let us begin this discussion with the topic of 'the curtain'. The curtain may be one of the most timeless symbols of theatre. It is the in-between of the performance and the spectators. It is the part of the theatre where one can hide. It is often built into the theatre architecture, and is an object that facilitates the showing of theatre when it is drawn back, but is also a barrier. In Act III Scene V of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the character of Polonius hides himself behind the arras in the chamber of Queen Gertrude to spy on the titular character. During the confrontation between Hamlet and Gertrude, Polonius cries out for help and Hamlet stabs him through fabric, killing him. In many regards this project attempts to draw back the curtain shielding espionage from the audience, which is both scholarly analysis and public knowledge. But as it is with Polonius, the curtain of secrecy, misdirection, and obfuscation are only a barrier, they do not guarantee protection. In drawing back the curtain through this dissertation espionage is revealed to be governed by a dialectic of success and failure, containing parallels between actor training and agent training, reliant on the archive for its execution, and governed by a desire to control.

Chapter 1 – A Subversive Invisible Theatre

“This inability to distinguish between the fiction and the reality of the intelligence world is ironically appropriate, because that was how it all began—in fantasy.”

- Phillip Knightley, *The Second Oldest Profession*.

The Curious Case of Theatre as Espionage

In 1978 in Liege, Belgium, Augusto Boal was invited to demonstrate an instance of Invisible Theatre for a news network in the city. As a part of the process Boal and his performers staged a scene in a supermarket where they attempted to challenge the traditional capital-driven exchange of money for goods. When Francois, the performer undercover as a shopper, approached the register he suggested to the cashier that instead of money he could pay with manual labor. While the intention of this Invisible Theatre performance was meant to address issues of wealth, distribution, and exchange, the manager of the supermarket instead viewed it as an instance of public disturbance and called the police. Susana Epstein and Augusto Boal describe the next moments in their article for TDR: “The police arrive. Making use of their proverbial politeness, they push around those people who bother them, maul those who are slowest to follow instructions, and even manage to immobilize Francois.”¹² In respect to this case study, the charge that the

¹² Augusto Boal and Susana Epstein, “Invisible Theatre: Liege, Belgium, 1978.” *TDR* 34 No. 3 (1990), 27.

police lay against Francois is irrelevant. What is critical is how the performance extended beyond its intended mandate once Francois had been detained and brought to the Liege police station.

The event staged by Boal and his performers was not only a moment of public performance. As was mentioned, it was also a demonstration for a television program. As Boal and Epstein explain,

Annie Declerck, from Flemish TV, had asked to film an invisible theatre piece for a program she was preparing on me and the theatre of the oppressed. Both my group and I had agreed to the program so everything in the supermarket had been filmed. Francois had a microphone inside his shirt. The sound technician had hidden his equipment among the fruit he was carrying in his shopping cart. The camera operator had hidden the camera inside a plastic bag which had a small hole the exact size of the lens.¹³

After the arrest, Annie, the television host, and Francois, the actor, were brought to the police station where they “continued in their roles. Being such good actors, they could keep up their invisible theatre personas without being suspected. Eventually, however, the police discovered the truth. Besides discovering Francois’ microphone, they found out that he had a job and earned a regular salary.”¹⁴ What is most remarkable about this situation is that through an act that was meant to stimulate social change, the performers, who were operating undercover, are assessed by store management as being suspicious characters. Then, while possessing technology meant to

¹³ Boal and Epstein, 28

¹⁴ Boal and Epstein, 28.

facilitate an instance of recording and reporting, they are brought into a government institution to be interrogated while still documenting the events through the technology that has been hidden on their person, effectively rendering them infiltrators of the police station. As Boal and Epstein confirm, “the fact that television was documenting this event added a new dimension to this story.”¹⁵ The performance extended beyond the supermarket into the sphere of government. The recording of the activities and, in particular, the police department changes the entire context of the performance. The act of documentation for the television series, while simultaneously being detained, transitioned the event into a realm of clandestine activity. Invisible Theatre was, and very well may be, a form of espionage. However, before addressing the infiltrating nature of the performance, this example of Applied Theatre should be further dissected to fully comprehend the stakes and implications of such performances.

This instance of Boal’s work has not aged particularly well. What is happening in this performance is undoubtedly a moment of trickery. It follows the definition of deception laid out by Thomas L. Carson in his publication *Lying and Deception* who reasons deception to be as follows: “in order for there to be deception it is necessary that the deceiver believes what she causes the other person(s) to believe is false.”¹⁶ This, as Carson explains,

¹⁵ Boal and Epstein, 28.

¹⁶ Thomas L. Carson, *Lying and Deception: Theory and Practice* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010), 48.

has many iterations. The most common two being what might be termed *explicit* and *indirect* deception. Explicit deception is in many way synonymous with lying. There is an active effort to falsify and misdirect. Conversely, indirect deception is through means which hang on the periphery of lying, such as allowing incorrect inference to take place. We can qualify the performance by Boal and associates within both categories. From one perspective, this event can be viewed as a moment of *explicit* deception. This is because the performance in Liege was planned to convince those in the grocery store that the actor Francois was a customer with no source of income who is proposing an alternative to the more normalized exchange of capital for goods – this even though Francois is, from what the text suggests, not without income or profession. From another perspective, we might view this event as an instance of *indirect* deception given that when the police arrive and question the performers, those participating allow the police to infer that what they see is truthful and has no ulterior motive or reality, and is most certainly not theatre.

The celebration and accolades that Boal received, and continues to receive, for his work and concepts are often due to his efforts to undermine authoritarian behaviors, to call into question systems that enable oppression, and to elevate those who are downtrodden. Many people would see these as admirable goals. Yet dabbling in the murky world of deception and betrayal—a betrayal of trust inherent in public interactions—would have many people, including artists, questioning the ethics of such practices in any other

scenario. Indeed, in other contexts this line of theatre or performance is highly frowned upon or even reviled. For example, the American conservative activist James O'Keefe routinely employs techniques echoing Boal's Invisible Theatre to undermine the public personas of what he determines to be left-leaning/progressive organizations, such as mainstream media groups, ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) and Senator Marjorie Landrieu, doing so through his ironically name activist group Project Veritas.¹⁷ Some might challenge the comparison between Boal and O'Keefe since Boal seeks to undermine authoritarianism whereas O'Keefe is interested in preserving conservative values and institutions, and even dabbles in supporting pseudo-fascist ideology.

Regardless of which side of the political equation one is on, the question that arises, which cannot be ignored, is whether the ends justify the means? The issue here is not the audience's voluntary suspension of disbelief as they watch a theatrical production. It is rather the dubious act of knowingly misleading, deceiving and duping others under the pretense of doing theatre or of pursuing theatre's presumably higher goals. The point is that whether one justifies such moments of deception by calling them "theatre," "Applied Theatre" or anything else, we are still left with a fundamental ethical contradiction that can be distilled into the simple question

¹⁷ For further perspective on Project Veritas and James O'Keefe's efforts see O'Keefe's publication *Breakthrough: Our Guerilla War to Expose Fraud and Save Democracy* and Chapter 11 of Bennett and Livingston's *The Disinformation Age*, which also offers insight into O'Keefe's practices.

of whether we seriously believe that an unethical process like deceiving the public can produce an ethical result.¹⁸ Rather than embodying the change that one wants to see in the world, Boal's Invisible Theatre presumes the right to embody disingenuousness under the guise of moral and ethical superiority. Rather than embodying change, it recasts embodied deceit not as deceit but as a promise of change—as a promise of something that is its opposite.

Boal's Invisible Theatre is merely one iteration of a means to an end that we may admire for its goals but question for its methods. It is a form of theatre that dabbles in Richard Schechner's concept of "dark play", which he describes in *Introduction to Performance Studies* as involving "fantasy, risk, luck, daring, intervention, and deception." Dark play, Schechner argues, is a form of performance that "subverts order, dissolves frames, and break its own rules—so much so that the playing itself is in danger of being destroyed, as in spying, double-agentry, con games, and stings."¹⁹ Herein lies the crux of Invisible Theatre methods: like spying and double-agentry, it is a form of dark play subverting order by employing deception and duplicitousness. Indeed, the originally intended performance in Liege was thoroughly destroyed by the convincing nature of Francois' performance, a destruction carried to further extremes when the police arrived. Through a dark play mode of enactment,

¹⁸ Considerations may include utilitarian ethics such as Peter Singer's *Democracy and Disobedience* or, for a brief overview, Singer and De Lazari-Radek's *Utilitarianism: A Very Short Introduction*.

¹⁹ Schechner, *Performance Studies*, 119.

Invisible Theatre looks to undermine the audience's awareness. It is a form of duping and a betrayal of the unwritten contract of theatre audiences consenting to engaging with the performance. But what is of interest here is the way in which the duplicity of Invisible Theatre is in fact quite similar to instances of dark play found outside of the theatre/theatrical framing, particularly espionage where the stakes are exponentially higher than anything Boal thought to achieve in the supermarket in Liege.

The Praxis of Spying: Espionage as Invisible Theatre

As any good introductory publication will explain the term “Applied Theatre” is broad and, like the definition of espionage, a succinct definition of “Applied Theatre” is challenging to pin down. Illustrative of this reality is that a variety of names are often used to refer to the same concept. These include Applied Drama, Applied Theatre, and even Applied Performance. Helen Nicholson explains in her monograph *Applied Drama* that “because applied drama and applied theatre are relatively new terms, there is no real consensus about how they are used.”²⁰ This provides a bit of a challenge in respect to using it as a mode of analysis for espionage. Understanding a part of the history helps circumvent this issue.

Applied Theatre, by many accounts, evolved out of the explosion of interest in social and political science in the post-WWII era—a period that

²⁰ Helen Nicholson, *Applied Drama: The Gift of Theatre* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 3.

coincides with the emergence of the Cold War and what are perhaps the most iconic images of twentieth century espionage between the East and West. Merging with the energized avant-gardist traditions of the time, particularly Brechtian theatre, the practice of Applied Theatre quickly became oriented towards socio-political commentary and an interest in social activism. Indeed, it is difficult to separate that commentary from the ideological battles that were being waged against the backdrop of the Cold War, which was itself being conducted beneath the broad conceptual umbrella of what we call espionage and intelligence. But theatre as a form of social activism is not a new concept as Prentki and Preston explain for those studying *The Applied Theatre Reader*. Theatre has routinely been used in social and political intervention but the term 'Applied Theatre' itself "alludes to a set of hybrid, interdisciplinary practices."²¹ The same could be said of espionage and intelligence. While many critics associate Applied Theatre with the avant-garde wing of political art, espionage is part of the avant-garde of most military and conflict efforts. Often it is literally the advanced guard. This avant-garde heritage already provides a link to espionage practice through the interest in using theatre outside its more mainstream framing, and with both practices often being at the forefront of their respective endeavors.

The current understanding of the practice of Applied Theatre is that it is, as Prentki and Preston identify, 'interventionist'. More specifically,

²¹ Tim Prentki and Sheila Preston, *The Applied Theatre Reader* (London, UK: Routledge, 2009), 11.

Nicholson suggests that the term Applied Theatre has been used as a kind of shorthand to “describe all forms of dramatic activity that primarily exist outside of conventional mainstream theatre institutions, and which are specifically intended to benefit individuals, communities and societies.”²² These ‘interventionist’ and ‘outside-the-realm-of-normal-theatre’ qualities are a central aspect of Applied Theatre. It presumes that theatre has the capacity to facilitate change and/or transformation.²³ Moreover, Applied Theatre accomplishes this through a blurring of the real and unreal, which as Nicholson explains “implies that there are personal and social benefits” for those performing and those watching.²⁴ Herein lies two other relationships to espionage work: just as theatre can be used to facilitate social change, so too can espionage. Furthermore, this is done through a practice that merges fiction and reality. Indeed, these have been the mandate and technique of espionage practices for centuries.

As mentioned, Applied Theatre is indebted to movements from the post-WWII era. More specifically, Nicholson identifies three social movements in theatre practice that have fed the development of Applied Theatre. Those are “theatre of the political Left, which have been variously described as

²² Nicholson, *Applied Drama*, 2.

²³ This is also reflected in Richard Schechner’s theories on performance, which are also indebted to the avant-gardists traditions as a part of its heritage, and articulated in his 1981 publication “Performers and Spectators Transported and Transformed” in *The Kenyon Review*.

²⁴ Nicholson, 156

political, radical or alternative; drama and theatre in education; and community theatre.”²⁵ As it would seem, not only is Applied Theatre an interventionist art form but it is also indebted to socially-oriented causes. It might be even more accurate to say that Applied Theatre has become almost synonymous with the idea of ‘theatre for social change’, which is acknowledged by many authors on the subject. This is critical information to be revisited shortly.

Beyond the interventionist aspect of Applied Theatre there is a significant legacy of its use in educational settings. The heritage of post-WWII Brechtian avant-gardism is also not the only influencing factor in the conceptualization of contemporary Applied Theatre practice. Applied Theatre is equally indebted to the pedagogical musings of Paulo Friere, who Nicholson explains was “committed to overturning traditional teaching methods based on hierarchical transmission of knowledge, and [whose] work has had a profound influence on theatre director Augusto Boal.”²⁶ At the core of Friere’s ideas was the notion that dramatic play, improvisation, and role-play could be used as learning mediums. This concept harkens back to both Aristotle and Brecht’s ideas of theatre as a didactic tool and is especially relevant for the next chapter of this project, which focuses on the training

²⁵ Nicholson, 8.

²⁶ Nicholson, 9.

regimes of espionage agents. But it is also significant for why Augusto Boal came to utilize Applied Theatre in his work.

As alluded to at the beginning of the chapter, Augusto Boal is perhaps best known for his publication *Theatre of the Oppressed*. Written during a period of extreme oppression in South America, Boal was interested in expanding on theatre and performance practice he had developed in the early part of his career. He sought to establish a theatrical form that would foster democracy. Of the various techniques and terms that he is credited with developing, Invisible Theatre is among the most important to this study of espionage as Applied Theatre practice. As a brief overview; “Boal devised invisible theatre as a way to continue stimulating debate on current political issues. Staged in public spaces and masquerading as real life, actors ‘performed’ rehearsed scenes that uncovered social injustices, drawing people’s attention and leading to impassioned discussions. The audience, never aware that they were watching theatre, were able to transcend, to a certain extent, the silencing effect of the ubiquitous ‘cop-in-the-streets.’”²⁷ While espionage does not necessarily seek to stimulate debate per se, it does seek to stimulate change as well as promote an awareness of a need for change. Further to this, and evidenced in the case-study cited earlier, Invisible Theatre is a form of performance that attempts to fly under the radar and is known for having its staged elements remain undetectable. It utilizes,

²⁷ Mady Schutzman and Jan Cohen-Cruz. *Playing Boal: Theatre, Therapy, Activism* (London, UK: Routledge, 1994), 3.

perhaps even exploits, the lack of awareness of those witnessing the event all the while relying on an audience being present.

To refine this conversation further, it is important to define espionage in a more formal capacity. In the modern sense, espionage has become synonymous with, perhaps even usurped by the term 'intelligence' along with its associated studies. Intelligence is a broad term in its own right that incorporates a wide variety of undertakings. In the introduction to the edited volume *The Handbook of Intelligence Studies* Loch K. Johnson explains that officers within the modern intelligence world would likely propose the definition of intelligence to be "the prelude to [Presidential] decision and action."²⁸ Johnson's description of intelligence is a standard understanding that is likely to be accepted by many in the wider public. Regarding this chapter, espionage, as is with intelligence, is a precursor to action, or intervention.

Where then does the distinction lie between the broad notion of intelligence and the specific activity of espionage? As explained on the website of the British intelligence service MI5, espionage is "the process of obtaining information that is not normally publicly available, using human sources (agents) or technical means (like hacking into computer systems). It may also involve seeking to influence decision-makers and opinion-formers to

²⁸ Loch K. Johnson, "Introduction" in *Handbook of Intelligence Studies*, ed. Loch K. Johnson (London, UK: Routledge, 2007), 1.

benefit the interests of a foreign power.”²⁹ It might also be suggested that espionage is often viewed as the act of obtaining “information some other party is trying to deny,” as intelligence scholar Abram N. Shulsky has written.³⁰ It is an accessing of information that others desire not to be accessed and such “hidden information must be ferreted out of encoded communications or stolen from safes and vaults, locked offices, guarded military and intelligence installations, and denied areas—a potentially dangerous task involving the penetration of the opposition’s camp and its concentric circles of defense.”³¹ Yet, as the website of MI5 identifies, espionage is not exclusively concerned with gathering intel, the distinction between the broad category of intelligence and the more narrow focus of espionage is that espionage is also the undertaking of infiltration and influence through clandestine means. Bearing this in mind, we might then define espionage as follows: 1. It is concerned with intelligence gathering and infiltration. 2. It is meant to be undetectable. 3. It is highly controlled. 4. It can be facilitated by almost anyone. 5. It is not only a wartime practice. 6. It is a tool used to perpetuate control. Returning to our comparison with Invisible Theatre, espionage, like Invisible Theatre, seeks to remain undetected, blurs

²⁹ “Counter Espionage,” Security Service MI5. UK Government, accessed April, 21st, 2021, <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/counter-espionage>.

³⁰ Abram N Shulsky and Gary James Schmitt, *Silent Warfare: Understanding the World of Intelligence*, 3rd ed. (Washington, D.C., USA: Brassey's, 2002), 172.

³¹ Johnson, *Handbook of Intelligence Studies*, 2.

the fictional and ‘the real’, and utilizes the unawareness of the audience to its advantage. Applied Theatre is also, like espionage, tightly controlled.

It is worth noting that while it may seem as though Invisible Theatre could be a form of performance that is exclusively improvised, it most certainly is not. As Boal explains in *Theatre of the Oppressed*, “Invisible Theatre is theatre; it must have a text with a scripted core, which will inevitably be modified, according to the circumstances, to suit the interventions of the spect-actors.”²¹ Like espionage there is a plan of action and pre-establish goals. Yet, through intensive rehearsal and practice it remains flexible and can adapt to new circumstances that befall the performers. To execute such work successfully those performing cannot be read as earnest, plotting, or fraudulent, they must act as though any of their preplanned events are a phenomenon. Boal is explicit about these attributes and concludes with the statement that “in the Invisible Theatre, the actors must perform just like real actors; that is, they must live.”³² These particular aspects echo Sara Schneider’s point on undercover work as an artistic performance practice, which she puts forward in her publication *Art of Darkness: Ingenious Performances by Undercover Operators, Con Men, and Others*. Schneider writes that in such work there is a distinct necessity for

²¹ Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (New York, USA: Theatre Communications Group, 1985), 277.

³² Boal, 277.

“identity-players” to appear genuine so as to not out themselves.³³ As Boal suggests, this is in part reliant on the performers adapting to new circumstances while they are performing.

While Invisible Theatre is not the only form of Applied Theatre it is perhaps the only form of Applied Theatre in which the boundary between theatre and espionage is so easily blurred. More important still, Applied Theatre may be the only form of theatre which parallels the goals of espionage—the intervention through deception and misdirection. As Nicholson explains, Applied Theatre is “interested in working in clearly defined contexts with and for specific audiences, and in furthering objectives which are not only artistic, but also educational, social and political.”³⁴ These ideas are contained in espionage work as well. It could even be stated that by shifting just a few words it would be possible to create a definition of espionage from this very description. For example, espionage might be defined as *artistic and interested in working in clearly defined contexts with and for specific audiences, and in furthering objectives which are social and political*. We can easily add *corporate* to the objectives of espionage alongside the social and political. Nicholson’s citation of education also plays a role in espionage. Indeed, the second chapter of this project works through some of the pedagogical aspects of espionage training as a significant part of

³³ Sara K. Schneider, *Art of Darkness*, 25.

³⁴ Nicholson, *Applied Drama*, 8.

the espionage process in the contemporary age. However, it is the idea of intervention that is significant for this introductory chapter.

The justification invoked for those engaging in Applied Theatre is that it helps facilitate activism and social change, which are typically, if not always, anchored by ethical and moral considerations. This establishes a firm trajectory for Applied Theatre practice, which is often intended to counter the unethical and the immoral. Following this logic, Boal's Invisible Theatre—a sub-category of his Theatre of the Oppressed—is a form of practice which is meant to counter oppressive policies and social hierarchies, and elevate the disenfranchised. It is governed by the same beliefs as those practices in the broader category of Applied Theatre. The issues that arise are the concerns identified at the outset of the chapter, namely that Invisible Theatre is not an ethical approach to theatre. It undermines the public trust, it relies on deception—an extension of lying—and misdirection, and, perhaps most conflicting of all, even with these dubious qualities it is still positioned as a morally and ethically sound form of theatre practice given its desired outcomes, which is a contradictory and even hypocritical positioning.

Espionage is almost always typified by deception, misdirection, lying, and hypocrisy as well, particularly with respect to the assumption that the deceptive practices of espionage are ethically justifiable because of the underlying so-called 'noble' ideological motivations governing and enabling their undertaking. Phillip Knightley alludes to this very point in the introduction of *The Second Oldest Profession* arguing that intelligence agencies “justify

their peacetime existence by promising to provide timely warning of a threat to national security.”³⁵ Spy services are allowed to undertake immoral and unethical practices because ostensibly they help protect the public. In the case of Western Nations this might be extended to protecting their forms of democracy. In theocratic states, the protection of the religious ideology governing the society.

It might be speculated that this form of ethical “doublethink,”³⁶ the Orwellian term employed by Knightley and shared between Invisible Theatre and espionage, arose out of the irrational situations of military and political conflict. As the history shows, much of the practice of Applied Theatre and Invisible Theatre can be traced back to the periods following major military and societal upheaval. This is also true of espionage. The intervention at the heart of Applied Theatre is rooted in ideas that captivated the interests of early Applied Theatre artists and was arguably in response to the casualties of war and political oppression. These individuals were interested in pursuing political activism through an artistic medium. This activism included, but was certainly not limited to, questioning rigid divisions in labor and social hierarchies, and furthering civil rights. Some scholars would suggest that certain forms of espionage have been at the heart of such social endeavors

³⁵ Phillip Knightley, *The Second Oldest Profession* (New York, USA: W. W. Norton & Company), 6.

³⁶ The term doublethink originally appears in George Orwell's dystopian novel *1984* and has, according to some, become synonymous with cognitive dissonance.

as well. For example, when we think of espionage conducted by the Allied Forces in WWII, the leading principles used to justify allied intervention were never far removed from actions taken in the name of civil or human rights and countering totalitarian social hierarchies, among other issues. Bearing this example in mind, “doublethink”, within both espionage and Invisible Theatre, is the noble justification given to ignoble actions. It is the ethical and moral dissonance at the heart of both espionage and Applied Theatre practices, such as Invisible Theatre, that engage in this form of “dark play”.

The problem is that unlike many of the socially conscious Applied Theatre initiatives so often described by scholars, espionage has also often been used to actively perpetuate social and political injustice and to maintain unequal civil standing. The point is that if espionage is thought of as an Applied Theatre practice, then it becomes obvious that Applied Theatre is not by definition benevolent or progressive either. This same point is affirmed by Prentki and Preston who write that “as the history tends to suggest, the roots of applied theatre grew in soil of progressive, radical people’s movements in various places around the world. From this it might be tempting to assume that applied theatre is, per se, a left-wing or socialist methodology. This would be a false assumption: Applied Theatre is no more or less at the service of a particular ideology than any other kind of theatre.”³⁷ James O’Keefe’s use of techniques like those developed by Boal illustrates this issue particularly well.

³⁷ Prentki and Preston, *The Applied Theatre Reader*, 13.

Invariably, espionage and Applied Theatre possess the quality of being merely a tool for the facilitation of whatever agenda is being undertaken. If it is understood that espionage is a form of Applied Theatre then it may be viewed as a tool of whomever is seeking to undertake an intervention. It should then also be understood that it can be undertaken by anyone who has the means to facilitate it. Bearing this in mind, we are left with the issue of where these clandestine events take place as a part of its context.

In any good review or critical analysis of a theatrical performance the location is often one of the first qualities identified. This context is just as critical when it comes to Applied Theatre, and perhaps even more-so when dealing with espionage. When delving into Applied Theatre and its affect Phillip Taylor employs the term Praxis, which he explains is “the manipulation of theatre form by leaders to help participants act, reflect, and transform.”³⁸ He also suggests that Praxis is an “interplay between three elements—people, passion, and platform” and that these are the core aspects of Applied Theatre in the pursuit of the aesthetic. With a view towards recognizing espionage as a form of theatre practice, it could be considered that the *people* are those who are facilitating espionage, those undertaking espionage, and those who are witnessing the espionage (whether they are aware or not). *Passion* would be defined as the motivations, which might range from the benevolent to power-reproducing motivations. It is *Platform*

³⁸ Philip Taylor. *Applied Theatre: Creating Transformative Encounters in the Community* (Portsmouth, USA: Heinemann, 2003), 30.

that would be identified as the final part of this equation and what is perhaps the most important in conceptualizing espionage as theatre and performance.

A platform has a variety of dimensional possibilities. Taylor cites Boal in his explanation and refers to “that marked space, what Boal describes as the aesthetic space, where people creating passions live.”³⁹ In the case of traditional Applied Theatre this could be the classroom, the forum, the prison, or any other place of intervention. In espionage, it might be thought of as the location of the operation. This could exist as a macro platform—the Soviet Union and nations of the Warsaw Pact during the Cold War—or as a micro platform—the café in Argentina where an agent is eavesdropping on others.

Place or *space* might be another term that could be substituted for platform. Sally Mackey maintains that Applied Theatre and place possess an “intimate relationship” and that “Applied Theatre researchers and practitioners engage with people in their contexts and locations, and people’s relationship to their *locus* is immanent in our work.”⁴⁰ This is no different in espionage. An undercover performance in a locked space, or a place in which entry is exclusive, governs espionage. The context and location, what Taylor calls the platform, is a critical component in the development of the espionage aesthetic as a form of Applied Theatre. Mackey further explains that, “the

³⁹ Taylor, *Applied Theatre*, 33.

⁴⁰ Sally Mackey, “Performing Location: Place and Applied Theatre.” in *Critical Perspectives on Applied Theatre*, ed. Jenny Hughes and Helen Nicholson (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 107.

fragility and mutability of place has become an increasingly global issue”⁴¹ and such fragility and mutability has a direct effect on the work produced through an Applied Theatre methodology. As an example of how *place* affects the means through which Applied Theatre and espionage are viewed, we can turn back to the account of Boal’s work. The example depicts a moment where an instance of Applied Theatre strays into the realm of clandestine work in part because like espionage, Invisible Theatre relies on those not engaging with the practice to be unaware of the performance taking place. Both also rely on the ability to blur the real and the unreal. Moreover, the performance effectively infiltrates the police station where authorities presume their right to not be deceived. Invisible Theatre employs the same techniques as espionage and was developed with a reliance on duplicitousness. Yes, it is connected by a desire to stimulate change, remain undetected, and to appear genuine (even though it is not), but it is also deceptive. As has been noted, espionage is artistic and interested in working in clearly defined contexts with and for specific audiences, and with further objectives that are contextualized by their social and political orientation. Irrespective of the means through which it is done, espionage and Invisible Theatre rely on the ability to deceive – to perpetuate a falsity. The deception can be both direct and indirect but there must be an audience to experience the deceptive act. This is also true in other instances of performance that stray into the realm of duplicitous practice, which have been investigated by scholars.

⁴¹ Mackey, 124.

Dark Play and Identity Artists: Espionage as Theatre and Performance Practice

It is not difficult to imagine how the underlying logic of espionage is linked to theatre and performance, particularly if one likens it to Applied Theatre and more specifically Boal's Invisible Theatre. In broad terms, for example, Schneider has demonstrated that undercover work like espionage is rife with instances of theatricality and performativity. In *Art of Darkness* she explains that, "Western culture has long dallied with the identity player—the spy, the undercover cop, the federally relocated witness, among others—which has had all to do with the dramatic potential these players have."⁴² It is easy to understand Schneider's point. Identity performance is inherently linked to acting since these performers present as someone they are not—a distinct connection between dark play and theatre. And these threads are more entwined still.

Some might argue that the most defining aspect of espionage is its undetectable nature, which is rooted in mimetic tradition, camouflage, deception, lying, and disguise, among many other traits, and is most certainly related to Schneider's identity artists. But what demands focus in the use of disguise, or what might be described as the ability of an entity to *present* or *perform* as one identity, while possessing another identity that remains hidden to those watching. This activity is easily placed within the definition of

⁴² Schneider, 4

deception laid out by Carson and also has a rich history within explorations of sociology and anthropology. For example, in his publication *The Mask of Medusa*, the surrealist intellectual Roger Caillois dissects the distinctions of adaptive behavior and classifies them in three capacities: “*disguise* (fancy dress), where the animal passes itself off as belonging to another species; *camouflage* (allocryptic, homochromatic, disruptive colours, homo-types), by means of which the animal is able to blend itself into its background; *intimidation*, where the animal paralyses or frightens its enemy (or its prey) without this terror being justified by a corresponding danger.”⁴³ The central point here is that instances of mimicry—themselves moments of deception—are distinct from one another, yet rely on the observer believing something which is not entirely true. Espionage, it might be said, is most engaged with both the first and second categories identified by Caillois—disguise and camouflage.⁴⁴

The assertion made by Caillois has also been addressed within theatre and performance scholarship. To tease out the principles of camouflage as they relate to masquerade and portraiture, alongside the negotiation of space, Laura Levin cites Caillois’ position in her monograph, *Performing Ground*:

⁴³ Roger Caillois, *The Mask of Medusa*, trans. George Ordish (New York, USA: Clarkson N. Potter, 1964), 59.

⁴⁴ Some scholars might also suggest that spies also dabble in intimidation as a part of the tactics of espionage. While this adds richness to the parallels between Caillois’ theories and espionage practice, this category has been excluded to help keep the analysis of espionage within the framework of theatre and performance practice.

Space, Camouflage, and the Art of Blending In. She explains that Caillois' categories "help distinguish camouflage from 'disguise,' the form of mimicry often associate with masquerade" and that "while each type of mimicry involves altering one's external form, camouflage is primarily a special act, a negotiation between a body and its immediate setting."⁴⁵ But while these categories are distinct, they are not exclusive, espionage engages in both disguise and camouflage, sometimes in the same moment. For example, an agent in a café may disguise themselves as an innocuous bystander to get close enough to a target to eavesdrop, effectively employing the space to blend into the background through disguise. Likewise, and more relevant to a conversation of Applied Theatre as espionage and vice versa, Boal's performers utilize their disguises to blend in as store patrons to record the interaction between François and the supermarket manager. As we can also understand from the Boal example, camouflage is no guarantee of success, which both Caillois and Levin acknowledge. Irrespective of being able to disguise oneself effectively or being caught out, at the heart of these events are duplicitous activities, which necessitates a return to the ethics of espionage and associated art-forms. This is because at the core of the distinction between disguise and camouflage is the dubiousness of deceptive performance.

⁴⁵ Laura Levin, *Performing Ground*, 37.

The idea of camouflage within the work of Boal is alluded to by Claire Bishop in her publication *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. As she describes it, Boal's work "[operates] by stealth, unannounced to the public as works of art."⁴⁶ It, as Levin might suggest, blends into the background appearing as a part of the public. However, Bishop also makes note of the fact that the context, what Taylor identifies as a part of the praxis of Applied Theatre, has morphed since the inception of Invisible Theatre.⁴⁷ More to the point, in recent years scholars have critiqued undercover and camouflaged art practices for their mistrustful methods which perpetuates "the fear that any instance of personal encounter might be being manipulated invisibly."⁴⁸ Camouflage and invisible practices, while at times coping and survival strategies, also breed mistrust. Much like the doublethink identified by Knightley, there is a misaligned ethical reasoning in the idea that to progress we must lie to people. Regarding espionage, we might liken this to a government conducting espionage abroad and then asking the citizenry to allow for it to conduct surveillance on the public while making the case that,

⁴⁶ Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London, UK: Verso, 2012), 123.

⁴⁷ Bishop cites Mandy Schutzman's essay 'Brechtian Shamanism: The Political Therapy of Augusto Boal', in *Playing Boal: Theatre, Therapy, Activism* to illustrate that even in Boal's own history, in moving his work from Latin America to Europe, the intervention was changed to an act of coping, which arguably devalued it.

⁴⁸ Catherine Wood, 'From Invisible Theatre to Thai Soup', *Untitled*, 32, Summer 2004, p. 45.

unlike in the instances of espionage abroad, the information gleaned from the public will not be exploited and the public is in fact being protected.

In returning to Schneider's work on identity artists and undercover performers, it behooves us to make the distinction that on an ethical level a con man or a fugitive or even someone in witness protection is not the same as an agent of espionage. All might rely on performances of deception, but their engagement of forms of mimicry, identity performance, or camouflage are undertaken for varying reasons. A con artist, for example, engages in deception for personal gain or for "obtaining money under false pretenses by the exercise of fraud and deceit" as Erving Goffman explains in his article "On Cooling Out the Mark; Some Aspects of Adaptation to Failure."⁴⁹ The hallmark of this practice is when "the mark becomes con artist as well, believing he's the one duping the con" only to be exploited in the end, as Schneider describes.⁵⁰ The con is defined by the belief of the identity artists undertaking the con that the activity and deceptive practice is justified. As one con artist explained of their victims in a study cited by Schneider, they're "just another con man too—and it's your money he wants. What you're doing is jacking each other up and the first guy to get the other's wallet is the winner."⁵¹ The

⁴⁹ Erving Goffman, "On Cooling the Mark Out; Some Aspects of Adaptation to Failure," *Psychiatry* 15, No. 4 (1952), 451.

⁵⁰ Schneider, *Art of Darkness*, 141.

⁵¹ Richard H. Blum and Stanford University Institute of Public Policy Analysis, *Deceivers and Deceived: Observations on Confidence Men and Their Victims, Informants and Their Quarry, Political and Industrial Spies and Ordinary Citizens*. (Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1972), 42.

ethical logic in this is the belief that because 'the mark' would otherwise victimize people, they are in turn a fair target. This form of identity artistry or duplicitous performance is governed by personal gain and indifference to the morals of cheating others. Moreover, there is little ideology guiding these beliefs and comes from a place of personal advancement.

Conversely, while witness protection also dabbles in identity performance and disguise, the assistance and 'new' identities provided to those in the program by law enforcement are justified by the belief that because they are helping the justice system root out unethical and immoral criminals these individuals are entitled to engage in a duplicitous act that is arguably less egregious. Unlike the con artist, the protected witness has their identity artistry endorsed and supported by the state.⁵² Refugees likewise, engage in forms of identity artistry and disguise, though often out a necessity of survival and escape from oppressive conditions. The ethical conundrum of their situation being far less abstract since those undertaking the performance are often doing so as a last resort and, more often than not, doing so not because they have committed crimes but for survival.

With espionage, we are presented with a different scenario again. Like those in witness protection, espionage engages in a form of identity performance that is often endorsed by the state. However, unlike witness protection, the justification is more inclined towards the logic used by the con-

⁵² Schneider, *Art of Darkness*, 164-166.

artist—which is that if a supporting state is not the first to engage in espionage then they are likely to fall victim to those who are conducting espionage against them. In a sense espionage is based on a permanent paranoia of intelligence insecurity. The target state, with a threat of having espionage conducted against it, leaps into action to conduct its own intelligence gathering. This infinite loop of justification is used to then rationalize the duplicitous work that is being undertaken. Regarding Cold War intelligence practices, Knightley summarizes this rational as follows: “The CIA need the KGB to justify its own existence; and how would the KGB fare without the threat of a CIA?”⁵³ But we are again required to ask, do the ends justify the means? As the Cold War depicts all too well, the justifying of deceptive and duplicitous behavior does not necessarily solve or mitigate conflict, in fact it sometimes perpetuates it. This is evocative of the issue that befalls invisible arts practices, where the public become less trusting of everyday moments on the street and the arts specifically. Deception is inherently unethical and destructive. It allows those who fall victim to the deception to justify their own unethical practices, and encourages those who have unwittingly been roped into the invisible performance to distrust future encounters.

With Boal, we might argue the same principle. By engaging in a duplicitous performance Boal justifies the use of the same techniques by those outside of his theatre company. While Invisible Theatre may be

⁵³ Knightley, *The Second Oldest Profession*, 5.

positioned as an intervention against oppression, which espionage likewise does, it can and may very well enable the justification of oppressive tactics. In the article by Boal and Epstein that documents Boal's activities in Liege they write that the following day the police arrive to arrest Boal. The irony is that in their effort to arrest Boal the police send plainclothes officers into theatre who are undetected by the practitioners—arguably through their ability to blend in with the public, or what we would call camouflage. Boal, strangely, seems shocked. He explains in the article that he “would have never thought that the Belgian police could come in like that.”⁵⁴ The police, in their efforts to arrest the facilitator of an event that they deem to have caused a public disturbance, employ the same duplicitous techniques that Boal positions as a method for subverting oppressive regimes. In the end Boal successfully barricades himself within a room marked “private”, and Belgian law prevents police from entering private rooms unauthorized, thus he is saved through laws of the state. Like with the CIA and KGB, as well as the con artists, both Boal and the Belgium police feel justified in their approach and utilize technique rooted in deception.

To understand how espionage is undertaken from a practical performance standpoint, it is worth noting that espionage has a strong relationship with both embodied and somatic practice. The somatic aspects of espionage might include the performance of the body as a mode of blending

⁵⁴ Boal and Epstein, “Invisible Theatre”, 29.

in. As Levin would describe “a camouflage act.”⁵⁵ This might also be described as a moment where the body produces the desired aesthetic. The bodily experience in a given moment is informing the thought process. Conversely, the embodied aspect of espionage is the ability to mine bodily experience to produce the aesthetic and knowledge. This aspect is a little more complex. It could be argued that if an agent is undertaking an act of deception—pretending to be someone they are not—then it would be challenging for them to mine an experience that is not their own to produce an aesthetic they have never experienced. This would suggest that the embodiment of the surrounding conditions, such as the environment, the necessity of remaining undetected, and the intensity of the act, all contribute to the production of the aesthetic. Furthermore, the learned cultural reproduction, what Marcel Mauss would call “the techniques of the body”⁵⁶ would be yet another form of embodied knowledge. In short, espionage can be considered as a form of somatic and embodied practice, providing yet another entry point into the analysis of espionage through the lens of theatre and performance.

However, the bodily aspects of espionage are only one aspect of the larger theatre and performance event that constitutes espionage. Returning to

⁵⁵ Levin, *Performing Ground*, 56.

⁵⁶ Marcel Mauss “Techniques of the Body” in *Techniques, Technology and Civilisation*, ed. Nathan Schlanger (Oxford, UK: Durkheim Press/Berghahn Books, 2006), 70.

the first section of this chapter momentarily, espionage, like Invisible Theatre, fits within the performance category of 'dark play'. Schechner's conceptualization of dark play is indebted to various scholars, such as Clifford Geertz and Erving Goffman, whose concepts of 'deep play' and 'frame devices' are woven into his theorization. Central to this is the issue of danger, risk, and total commitment. Unlike performances while under surveillance, or the somatic and embodied performance aspects, dark play leans into the threats, risks, and potential failures that define espionage as performance. This is well illustrated in Boal's Invisible Theatre as well. The risk in being caught-out during the performance in Liege becomes all-too-real for those participating in the event.

Beyond these defining characteristics, at the core of Schechner's idea is the repeatedly cited characteristic of espionage—that it is often meant to be undetectable and rooted in deception. As noted earlier, Laura Levin explains that the ability to remain undetected, particularly within socio-political contexts, directly ties to the idea of camouflage. She cites the work of Roy Behrens who explains that camouflage "comes from the French verb *camoufler*, meaning to mask or disguise."⁵⁷ The invocation of the mask is an interesting addition to the conceptualization of espionage as theatre and performance. Often masks are thought of as something manufactured sitting atop of the face obscuring what is beneath. As noted in the discussion

⁵⁷ Levin, *Performing Ground*, 9.

between Henderson and Tilley in their dialogue for the *Canadian Theatre Review*, in certain forms of theatre reliant on mask-work it is understood that a central tenant of the technique is to provide the audience with a generic canvass, the mask on the actor's face, which they can project a character onto.⁵⁸ Furthermore, the use of masks within theatre is an accepted convention of the performance. Generally speaking, an audience has no problem with not seeing the 'real faces' of the performers because they have consented to this reality in choosing to engage with the theatrical performance. With espionage, however, the audience is unaware that they are viewing a masked identity. It has been thrust upon them. The same is true of Invisible Theatre. The idea of disguise and mask is easily linked the 'dramatic potential' that Sara Schneider refers to in her publication. But the notion of masks, disguise and camouflage are not a perfect explanation for the theatrical technique in espionage. We are also required to return to the earlier cited idea of deception, because linked to the idea of espionage and the association of disguise is the concept of the unwitting audience. Schneider identifies this early on in her text explaining that "these identity player's audiences are there—and active."⁵⁹ That there is someone bearing witness to the moment of deception, and sometimes participating in the deception while being deceived.

⁵⁸ Jan Henderson and Sara Tilley, "Clowning and Neutral Mask." *Canadian Theatre Review* 183, Summer (2020), 20.

⁵⁹ Schneider, *Art of Darkness*, 4.

A remaining area of theatre and performance that should be addressed is the concept of mimesis. In one sense mimesis is the theory that ties much of this scholarship together due to its addressing of where art and life are distinguished from one another. Mimesis governs much of the western world's conceptualization of artistry and the arts, and Matthew Potolsky's tidy publication *Mimesis* explains this succinctly in the introduction. Potolsky write that "[m]imesis is among the oldest terms in literary and artistic theory, and is certainly among the most fundamental. It so defines our way of thinking about art, literature and representation more generally that we rely on the concept even if we have never heard of it or do not know its history."⁶⁰ Espionage as it relates to mimesis is concerned primarily with representation, and art more broadly. Mimesis is the linkage between mask, camouflage, deception, and more. By these standards theatrical mimesis is at the heart of spy-work.

Potolsky breaks down the ideas of representation in the performing arts further for his reader and clarifies that theatre is inherently reliant on mimesis as the means of production, though they are not synonymous. He explains that "the imagery and association of the theatre compromise another of the central thematic elements of the theory of mimesis. Theatre is not, strictly speaking, identical with mimesis. But theatre and theatricality have been so central to the theory since antiquity that it is nearly impossible to separate the two ideas."⁶¹ The point is that theatrical mimesis is "a

⁶⁰ Potolsky, *Mimesis*, 1.

⁶¹ Potolsky, 72.

representation *for* someone, and not only a representation *of* something else.”⁶² We then might view espionage as a mimetic event due to the fact that those engaging in espionage are simultaneously representing what is normal and non-suspicious, much in the way that identity-artists are engaging in a performance, as suggested by Schneider, but do so for the public and organizations they are attempting to infiltrate, entirely within the vein of camouflage as articulate by Levin. At the core of this idea is the exchange between the presenter/performer and the witness, and a type of roleplaying that not only requires someone to be on the receiving end, but in fact always presumes such a reality. Espionage pushes this further by relying on the absolute believability for the act of deception to take place. This is unlike instances of self-presentation or a framed theatrical event in which it is not absolutely necessary for everyone to believe everything is real. Whenever this does not happen in espionage it, to paraphrase Sara Schneider, cuts the viability of the performance short—literally.⁶³

The benefits and challenges of an analysis of espionage as theatre and performance practice is that it is rich in theoretical examples, while lacking in accessible data. It is a fascinating case study, yet “raises meaty ethical dilemmas and issues.”⁶⁴ Once drawn out the formulation of espionage

⁶² Potolsky, 74.

⁶³ Schneider, *Art of Darkness*, 9.

⁶⁴ Schneider, 16.

as theatre and performance practice, and more specifically as Applied Theatre is easily identified. Moreover, certain forms of Applied Theatre can even begin to seem like espionage. There is a shared interventionist goal, both are theatre outside of the traditional framing, both can remain undetected, and both are reliant on the praxis of platform, people, and passion, to develop the desired aesthetic. So how does anyone know when Applied Theatre is being successfully employed? Taylor poses this question directly to his reader when working through the principles of Applied Theatre. He asks “what criteria should we draw on as we begin a conversation about the effectiveness of applied theatre? Who benefits from an evaluation? To what extent does evaluation help improve the quality of the applied theatre? What are the most appropriate techniques for discerning information about the progress and achievement?”⁶⁵ These questions can be directly applied to espionage practice. However, it may be more important to ask how might this be done? How does one go about evaluating these criteria?

Arguably, part of the process of determining whether an endeavor in Applied Theatre is successful is through evaluation. As Taylor might explain it, “evaluation refers to the search for information that indicates effectiveness, which can mean a variety of different things based on who actually wants the evaluation.”⁶⁶ In short, it is an assessment of whether the goals of the Applied

⁶⁵ Taylor, *Applied Theatre*, 52.

⁶⁶ Taylor, 103.

Theatre undertaking, in this case espionage, have been achieved. To illustrate an example of an evaluation or a determination of success we will turn to a case study featuring the agent Virginia Hall, who has been declared by many as The United States' greatest female spy.

Who's Afraid of Virginia Hall?: Measuring success in espionage

Before analyzing the success of Virginia Hall, it is critical to establish who Hall was working for and just how Hall's success will be measured. Virginia Hall was employed by the Special Operations Executive of the British Government during the Second World War. This entity was a covert section dedicated to clandestine warfare and greenlighted by Winston Churchill himself. The organization was famously tasked with "setting Europe ablaze."⁶⁷ Yet many authors have concluded that this did not, in fact, ever really occur. Theatre and performance scholar James Harding points out that "its primary responsibility was not intelligence-gathering but sabotage and subversion in German-occupied territories – the kind of activity that would presumably cultivate popular uprisings among the local populations and lay the groundwork for a subsequent allied invasion."⁶⁸ While certain aspects of Harding's position on the effectiveness of the SOE are up for debate, he is absolutely correct about the other endeavors carried out by the organization.

⁶⁷ Knightley, *The Second Oldest Profession*, 118.

⁶⁸ James Harding, "You Forgot Your Double Security Check", *Performance Research* 17, No. 3 (2012), 79.

They were tasked with collecting intelligence, sabotage, reconnaissance, establishing Resistance movements, and rescue operations. Key to this was that these tasks would be carried out in secret and undercover. In understanding that Hall was a part of this group, how then do we assess her outcomes? First, we must refer to the approach of evaluating Applied Theatre.

Taylor proposes that Applied Theatre practice and its success is evaluated by assessing where the goals have been met. Espionage poses an interesting challenge for this sort of undertaking because even though it is used as a tool for smaller clandestine assignments, it is often used in large-scale offensives as well. Therefore, an assessment of outcomes could be undertaken in a variety of manners. For example, Virginia Hall was an agent of the Second World War Allies and it could be argued that the very success of the Allies over the Axis forces means that the Applied Theatre of espionage was a successful endeavor. This would be a macro analysis and although it has certain value, what this project is most interested in is the micro analysis of the individual efforts of agents. There is one other significant point to make. In the case of the Second World War, some may suggest that it is easy to identify whether or not an agent was successful merely by looking into if they were killed or missing in action.⁶⁹ As was explained with a citation from

⁶⁹ A cursory glance at the last few pages MRD Foot's *SOE: An Outline History of the Special Operations Executive, 1940-46* will illustrate just how many agents were lost in action.

Schneider earlier in the chapter; any failure in the undertaking cuts the viability of the performance short—literally⁷⁰. However, merely analyzing the death rate of agents would be a gross oversimplification of success and/or failure within espionage. A more nuanced analysis is required. Of interest to this project are when instances of failure threatened a directive and where efforts may have fallen short. A case study of Virginia Hall provides exactly this opportunity.

Described by renowned WWII historian M.R.D. Foot as an “indomitable agent with a ‘brass foot’”⁷¹ Virginia Hall was nothing short of remarkable. She was the only woman who served in the Second World War to win the Distinguished Cross Award for “extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against the enemy”⁷² and her life from Foreign Service worker to training by the Allied Forces SOE section is well documented and offers substantial insight into a successful agent whose work was integral to the success of multiple missions. What is perhaps one of the more intriguing aspects of Hall is that her initial work was not for the United States government, but for the United Kingdom. As was mentioned earlier, Richard Schechner explains that dark play “emphasizes risk, deception, and sheer

⁷⁰Schneider, *Art of Darkness*, 9

⁷¹ M. R. D. Foot, *SOE in France: An Account of the Work of the British Special Operations Executive in France, 1940-1944* rev. ed. (London, Whitehall History Publishing, 2004), 155.

⁷² Elizabeth P. McIntosh *Sisterhood of Spies: The Women of the OSS* (Annapolis, USA: Naval Institute Press, 1998), 177.

thrill.”⁷³ This risk and thrill is an excellent description of Hall herself. What is slightly unusual is the extent to which she risked her life while serving for another nation in a military campaign.

Born in Baltimore and raised in an upper-class family, Virginia Hall was both smart and talented, and she landed a job with the State Department while she was still quite young. Throughout the 1930's she moved from embassy to embassy, eventually arriving in Turkey to take up a clerical position in a consulate. During a hunting trip with friends she accidentally shot herself in the foot, doing enough damage that the limb had to be amputated. After her recovery in the United States, she returned to Europe, and she worked in Venice and Estonia until eventually moving to France. Shortly after her arrival in Paris, Nazi Germany invaded Poland and the Second World War began. Hall initially worked as an ambulance attendant for the French Army until the fall of Paris, after which she relocated to London via Spain.

Over the course of her time in London, Hall was recruited by the newly formed British Special Operations Executive. As one of the few women to even be permitted to enter the initial training regimen of the SOE, she defied all odds and successfully achieved a position as a clandestine operative. Through this program the SOE “trained her in weapons, communications, resistance activities, and security measures,” all of which were integral to her

⁷³ Schechner, *Introduction to Performance Studies*, 119.

coming role as an agent.⁷⁴ In addition to this instruction she was also taught how to develop cover stories and professions—an important part of espionage work.

While the other aspects of the SOE training program were critical in preparing operatives with the necessary skills to carry out subversive work, the most relatable aspect to theatre work is the latter part i.e. cover stories and professions. As Pearson explains in her biography of Hall; “one of the most important elements for the agents in the field was their cover story—who they were, what they were doing, where they had come from. They couldn’t walk a single step in enemy territory without a series of lies that could flow out of their mouths as naturally as if they were the truth.”⁷⁵ This type of work is quite clearly in line with Schneider’s “identity artists” and Carson’s idea of deception – that one person would be convincing another to believe something which they themselves know to be false. So too is this the case for the performers in Boal’s Invisible Theatre. So how do we understand whether Hall was successful or not in the production of cover stories?

Success, of course, depends upon the goals one sets, and in Hall’s case, the goals were multiple. At the most basic level, the goal was to infiltrate and gather intelligence while remaining undetected, and these

⁷⁴ Gerald K. Haines, “Virginia Hall Goillot: Career Intelligence Officer” *Prologue: The Journal of the National Archives* 26 No. 4 (1994), 250.

⁷⁵ Judith Pearson, *The Wolves at the Door: The True Story of America’s Greatest Female Spy* (Guilford, USA: Lyons Press, 2005), 71.

activities had the aim of gaining wartime advantage and dominance. Furthermore, the goals established by the SOE and its creators were explicit and clear: “to co-ordinate all action, by way of subversion and sabotage, against enemy overseas” and to “set Europe ablaze.”⁷⁶ Finally, at an individual level, there were Hall’s specific goals: to “report on the general situation in France”; “to organize a Resistance network that would fight the Germans by any means possible”; and to remain undetected and “live a lie for months on end.”⁷⁷ Many of these directives have overlapping goals, and at the same time stand on their own as individual details to consider. To understand them in a more in-depth manner, they will be worked through point by point to demonstrate that overall Hall was a successful agent.

With respect to the gathering of intelligence and infiltrating occupied France and the opposing forces, Hall did very well. She arrived in Vichy France via Spain on August 23rd 1941 as “the first woman field agent the SOE had sent into France.”⁷⁸ Within the first four months of her arrival Hall had not only publically registered at the official government offices under the guise of a reporter, but she had also interviewed government bureaucrats and reported this information back to the London headquarters of the SOE.

Amid these activities, Hall remained undetected with astonishing success. Indeed, she was so effective at remaining anonymous that she

⁷⁶ M. R. D. Foot, *SOE: An Outline History*, 2.

⁷⁷ Pearson, *Wolves at the Door*, 75.

⁷⁸ Pearson, 82.

overstayed the typical six months in the field. In fact, after nearly fifteen months in her position, she only returned to London when Allied forces pushed the Nazis out of North Africa and the displaced Nazi forces arrived in the French State. This long-term stay is itself strong evidence of a successful undercover performance.

The main aspect of Hall's undercover initiatives was the facilitation of a network of resistance operatives and recruiters, while coordinating with the Head Quarters of the SOE. Hall's reputation as a leader preceded her. The ability she possessed in controlling information and assets was highly regarded by both those in the United Kingdom and those in the French Resistance. The success of her initial mission was in part due to her diligence and control of information. As Pearson explains, "she was discreet to a fault. Several times over the [...] year, the feelings of one or another of her Resistance members were hurt. They felt they were being excluded from a discussion or a mission because she saw them untrustworthy. That was not at all the case. Rather, it was because almost all work was done on a 'need to know' basis."⁷⁹ Although Pearson oversimplifies this issue, the point stands firm; these two well-executed layers of control between her and London, and her operatives in France, was a distinct reason for her overall success.

In order to position espionage within a framework of Applied Theatre, it is critical to consider in this moment how we might see the success of Virginia

⁷⁹ Pearson, 134.

Hall in comparison to the work of Augusto Boal. A significant critique of Boal and his Invisible Theatre has been formulated in this paper. It challenges Boal's belief that the use of deceptive and unethical technique can be justified because of the ethical or morally rooted goal that the technique pursues. Virginia Hall is engaged in the same practice. The major distinction between the two 'practitioners' fighting against oppressive forces is that, unlike Boal, Hall is operating within the theatre of war, which is clearly a higher stakes endeavor. This returns us to the question of whether the end goal justifies the means of achieving that goal. If we recall, as an operative of the SOE Hall's mandate was to "set Europe ablaze" and to "co-ordinate all action, by way of subversion and sabotage, against enemy overseas."⁸⁰ There are no caveats within this statement. The totalizing mandate given to the SOE ostensibly allowed them to undertake espionage and its associated practices without much consequence in pursuit of winning the war. A list of war-crimes (an ironic statement in the best of times) does not need to be composed to illustrate how unmitigated military and clandestine activities cannot be justified even in pursuit of principled and noble goals. Success in espionage, the espionage of the Second World War in this case, means an accomplishment in techniques of obfuscation, disguise, and camouflage, which enables the activities of sabotage and subversion.

Following this, if Boal's Invisible Theatre is already considered unethical due to the duplicitousness at the heart of the activities, and is further

⁸⁰ Foot, *SOE: An Outline History*, 2.

implicated by the cyclical nature of deception that it enables, yet lacks the context of physical violence, death, and destruction that defines war-time clandestine work, then we must conclude that espionage, which likewise employs deceit and enables a cycle of equivalent activities like sabotage, deception, and violence, is no more ethical than Invisible Theatre. By many accounts, it is more unethical. Therefore, successful espionage—a success in deceiving others and providing the opportunity to undertake subversive work—proves it a form of Applied Theatre practice that dabbles in the destructive and deceitful. Espionage might then be viewed as an unethical theatrical practice, which is a perpetuator of the very conflict and oppression it seeks to challenge and undermine.

Strangely enough, what was perhaps the most significant failure of Hall—if it can be described as such—was her inability to achieve Churchill's directive of “setting Europe ablaze”. The argument that the SOE did not in fact accomplish anything near to the point of deeming this objective successful is succinctly summed up by Foot who writes that “[i]t would be absurd to claim for SOE that it could have won the war by itself, or even—on most fronts—that it was a major battle-winning influence. In a few places its effect was critical.”⁸¹ It could be that Hall was one of those rare exceptions and her work had significant impact, as Foot would describe. This is in fact alluded to in an

⁸¹ Foot, *SOE: An Outline History*, 358.

article for the journal *Prologue* by National Reconnaissance historian Gerald

K. Haines who wrote the following concerning Hall:

Working in a region infested with enemy troops and constantly hunted by the Gestapo, with utter disregard for her safety and continually at the risk of capture, torture and death, she directed the Resistance Forces with extraordinary success in acts of sabotage and guerrilla warfare against enemy troops, installations and communications. Miss Hall displayed rare courage, perseverance and ingenuity; her efforts contributed materially to the successful operations of the Resistance Forces in support of the Allied Expeditionary Forces in the liberation of France.⁸²

Although the SOE did not set Europe ablaze, Hall herself achieved the other dictum laid out by Winston Churchill and “co-ordinated action, by way of subversion and sabotage, against enemy overseas.”⁸³ In a sense Hall becomes the Invisible Theatre performer bar none.

The final three mandates of Virginia Hall are all addressed in the previous analysis. Firstly, she submitted regular reports both publicly and coded through her journalism as well as through radio relays. Secondly, she successfully organized a Resistance network that would fight the Germans by any means possible. And while the ring was eventually infiltrated once she had left France, during her time as the central agent in the network she recruited a significant number of resistance fighters to the Allied cause while also facilitating sabotage and the rescue of downed fighters and personnel.

⁸² Haines. “Virginia Hall Goillot,” 258.

⁸³ M. R. D. Foot. “Was SOE Any Good?” *Journal of Contemporary History* 16 No. 1 (1981), 170.

Thirdly, and finally, Virginia Hall's significant success was primarily because she was able to remain undetected and, to quote Pearson again "live a lie for months on end."⁸⁴ Hall effectively engaged in performances of camouflage and identity artistry, through a technique of blurring the real and unreal—similar to how Boal's Invisible Theatre performers navigated the supermarket in Liege. The initial and governing question posed at the beginning of this section asked whether Virginia Hall's work was successful or not. By assessing the outcomes of her directives, as per Taylor's suggestion, we can conclude that indeed she was a very successful agent of espionage. But, there is more to consider of Hall's work.

Not only is the success of her outcomes a measure of her aptitude as an espionage agent, but it is also a sign of success in Applied Theatre. This, as the logic dictates, also suggests that Hall was also the expert performer of deception, or a paramount "identity-artist" in the terms laid out by Schneider. The success of Hall and other colleagues helped facilitate an intervention in both occupied Europe and the world at large, and the concept of intervention is a critical aspect of Applied Theatre practice. The intervention of Hall is in moments of rescue, sabotage, and the subversive undermining of the Axis forces. Considered from another perspective, Hall's successful intervention falls squarely within the mandate of Boal's Invisible Theatre. Hall and her colleagues were undertaking their work in direct opposition to fascist control and in the spirit of democratizing ideals. The very fact that agents like Hall

⁸⁴ Pearson, *Wolves at the Door*, 75.

would never publically acknowledge their double identity is also directly in line with a central tenant of Invisible Theatre. Indeed, the unaware public that were constantly around Hall while she was undercover could arguably be thought of as the 'spect-actors' that Boal describes. Hall's work even fits with Boal's assertion that at its core Invisible Theatre must have a scripted direction that modifies depending on the circumstances of the performance. This, it might be suggested, is central to espionage. There is a distinct plan of action that is modified depending on the situation the agents find themselves in, whether that be shifting political situations, or disruptions in intelligence gathering plans.

The other area required for the evaluation of Applied Theatre, which espionage also succeeds in, is the aspect of Praxis. In the case of Hall the three elements of *people*, *passion*, and *platform* would arguably be the agents and the public, the goal of undermining the fascist/axis agenda, and the platform of the public sphere, such as the streets, the shops, and the government buildings. Espionage easily fulfills the criteria of Applied Theatre Praxis and Hall is invariably a paramount example of an Applied Theatre practitioner.

With these points established, it is important to conclude this chapter by addressing one remaining issue. While Hall herself was a superb espionage agent, one of the best by many accounts, her activities were not without flaw or opposition. The Resistance ring established by Hall was infiltrated after her departure from France. In reality, this was an ongoing

effort even while Virginia Hall was still operating in Lyon. The efforts of opposing forces—the Nazi Germany and Vichy France officials—are equally as subversive. Hall's network was infiltrated by an enemy agent; a clergyman born Robert Alesh who used the pseudonym Abbé Ackuin. It was through Alesh's earlier history of aiding a resistance network in his former parish that he was able to become a double agent when he moved to Paris to take up a position in the then occupied city.

Alesh was required to achieve many of the same outcomes as Hall. He needed to appear as though he was merely a Catholic priest and not an agent of Germany and Vichy France, that he was supportive of resistance efforts, and that he held no allegiance to the German government. However, his mandate provided by the Nazi Government was to expose Resistance members. He would be acting a role that was untrue to him and likewise living a lie for months on end. He was driven by a mandate and supported by a state. Alesh, it might be suggested, mirrors the role of James O'Keefe in our comparison of Virginia Hall to Augusto Boal. Alesh employs the deceptive techniques of Hall, and by extension Boal, to disguise, camouflage, and enable his own mandated subversion. His work as an identity artist is reliant on methods that blur the boundary between art and real life, and his subsequent success proves the perpetuating reality that befalls those who undertake dubious practices to achieve a noble, or in this case a sanctioned, goal. Like the Liege police, who use the same methods of identity performance as the Invisible Theatre performers to make themselves invisible

and arrest Boal, O’Keefe and Alesh appropriate the strategy too. It again returns us to the concern of whether the ends justify the means, particularly if such deceptive practices are normalized and enable the unethical techniques they employ.

This use of Applied Theatre practice is a critical aspect of espionage work and speaks to a point from earlier in the chapter; that applied theatre work is in many regards value-neutral and is not inclined towards benevolence, altruism or humanitarianism. It is those who wield espionage as Applied Theatre tool who dictate to what ends it will be used. This is also echoed by Prentki and Preston who wrote that “it might be tempting to assume that applied theatre is, per se, a left-wing or socialist methodology. This would be a false assumption: applied theatre is no more or less at the service of a particular ideology than any other kind of theatre.”⁸⁵ This too is the reality for espionage. The case studies and examples employed in the chapter speak directly towards this point. Throughout history many instances of espionage could be positioned as well-intentioned undertakings, but it is ultimately an issue of subjectivity—who is invested in what outcome. Neither Applied Theatre nor espionage has a built-in positive intention. It is at the discretion of those utilizing it to make it so. Moreover, we are forced to consider the ethical issue raised in the very first part of the chapter, whether

⁸⁵ Prentki and Preston, *The Applied Theatre Reader*, 13.

duplicitous and deceptive activities can ever be truly impactful in a positive manner. Do the ends ever justify the means?

The Wielding of Theatre and Espionage

When espionage is considered as theatre and performance practice, we may be coming to a closer understanding of why Plato banished the poets from his republic. To paraphrase Plato, theatre can be used for both instances of *good* and *bad*. Espionage possess these qualities as well. In many respects espionage has no master, it is a tool and it exists outside of the dichotomy of good and evil. Each of these professions have been vilified throughout history, though admittedly not in the same capacity. With theatre, it is the didactic quality that arguably has made it a threat in various cultures, that it can be used to teach and spread immoral or unethical thought. Espionage on the other hand is a generator of suspicion and used to undermine societal structures. Yet when we factor in artistic practices such as Invisible Theatre we see these distinctions collapsed. Another shared aspect between theatre and espionage is that both disciplines share a strange allure. Some individuals view both professions as possessing a nobleness, which we might speculate protects them from being dismissed outright. Though only in some instances. Perhaps it is merely a problem with marketing and both disciplines require a rebranding. Or perhaps what is closer to the truth is that both espionage and theatre should be scrutinized in a much more serious manner.

By investigating espionage as Applied Theatre practice, we are provided with new insights into the process, motivations, and outcomes of the work. Firstly, that espionage and its successful execution is reliant on deceptive and duplicitous practices that are artistic in nature. Secondly, that espionage presents a unique blurring of the real and imagined. Thirdly, that espionage and theatre are value-neutral undertakings which can be morphed and manipulated by those facilitating them. And fourthly, that espionage is a unique instance of Applied Theatre practice and that certain forms of Applied Theatre, namely Invisible Theatre, might also be framed as instances of espionage.

In many regards this chapter is meant to progress the understanding of espionage beyond the political, military, and government connotation that it typically possesses. Espionage is at its core an artful practice, much like how Schneider describes the work of people who conduct undercover operations. As other scholars have alluded to, by its very nature espionage taps into the performance process existing in a space between ritual and theatre; the real and unreal; the public and the private; the good and the bad; the powerful and the weak; the necessary and un-necessary; and the successful and failed. We have always known that espionage is an ancient practice, and by understanding that it is a form of theatre we are able to trace the idea of performance even further in the written record. However, we are still left with the following questions: how is espionage facilitated? How does it exist in the contemporary world? And, directly in line with this chapter, how does it exist

in a state of failure? Each of these inquiries will be answered in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2 - Cultural Camouflage: Acting Identities in World

War II Espionage

“Never come out of character. By this we mean not only from the clothes point of view but from the mental side also.”

- Anonymous, *SOE Training Manual: Beaulieu*.

Intermixing Theatre and the Clandestine

The world of espionage, whether political, business, or military-oriented is a complicated, secretive entity, which requires intelligence and skill to allow an operative the chance of a successful endeavor. Nowhere is this more critical than within military or police clandestine operations, where failure can bring the consequence of torture, disappearance, and even death. What is intriguing, though, is that among all professions in the world, acting/performing is, in many respects, one of the most relatable to espionage work, even though failure in this profession may only be torturous rather than life-threatening. Easily linked by the requirement for both operatives and performers to assume new and fictitious identities, this connection between disciplines is relatively uncharted territory within theatre and performance studies barring a few related explorations. Borrowing from theories within sociology, history, and performance studies, and utilizing concepts such as mimetic realism and camouflage as a performance practice, this chapter is an attempt to begin the exploration and questioning of this intersection of disciplines, and to establish just how these two areas of knowledge come

together in what is perhaps one of the more curious applications of theatre and performance.

Before attempting to further intermix the disciplines of theatre and clandestine undertakings it is important to review the definition of 'espionage' established in the first chapter. As noted, the modern understanding of espionage has become synonymous with the term 'intelligence', and Loch K. Johnson suggests that a broadly accepted definition for the term would be "the prelude to [Presidential] decision and action."⁸⁶ Johnson's description of intelligence is likely to be accepted by many scholars, and he continues on to explain that "at a more narrow or tactical level, intelligence refers to events and conditions on specific battlefields or theatres of war, what military commanders refer to as 'situational awareness.'"⁸⁷ In further defining espionage Michael Andregg's explanation of the '*operator*' might also be invoked as the more relevant description of espionage agents being examined in this chapter.⁸⁸ Building on these perspectives it was concluded that espionage is in possession of six qualities, which are as follows: 1. It is concerned with intelligence gathering and infiltration. 2. It is meant to be undetectable. 3. It is highly controlled. 4. It can be facilitated by anyone. 5. It is not only a wartime practice. 6. It is a tool used to perpetuate dominance

⁸⁶ Loch K. Johnson, *Handbook of Intelligence Studies*, 1.

⁸⁷ Johnson, 1.

⁸⁸ Michael Andregg, "Intelligence Ethics: Laying a Foundation for the Second Oldest Profession," in *Handbook of Intelligence Studies*, ed. Loch K. Johnson (London, UK: Routledge, 2007), 52-53

and advantage. Bearing this definition in mind, we will again turn to the events of World War II to set the staging ground for this theatre of war.

Setting the Stage

During the Second World War the British together with their associated allies established the Special Operations Executive (SOE). Within this establishment western espionage arguably began its industrial revolution. The effort appeared simple: produce agents through a regimented system for deployment abroad during conflict. Agents were given a variety of tasks which ranged from sabotage, collecting intelligence, aiding other operatives, and carrying out secretive and lethal missions. Specific to at least one training base, known as a finishing school, was the production of cover stories and false identities. Existing records state that in at least one of these finishing schools an actor was brought in to guide agents in the practice of camouflage as well as in the creation and performance of cover identities. What might be termed as *cultural camouflage*, and what this project defines as the assuming and enacting of a strategically created and culturally aware personal identity.⁸⁹ Accompanying this instruction by professionals was a set of manuals that would identify specific cultural and societal characteristics and

⁸⁹ Other definitions of the term *cultural camouflage* have been developed independently of this project, such as in Guy Lanoue's use in his article "Language Loss, Language Gain: Cultural Camouflage and Social Change Among the Sekani of Northern British Columbia".

challenges, as well as providing basic training skills that agents might have to employ, and were likely engage with and require during their fieldwork.

For the sake of providing a framework to engage with the intersection of espionage and theatre, the nature of 'culture' within the context of conflict—occupied Europe in the 1940's in this case—and fundamentally, the nature of 'culture' in the context of espionage and the theatrical manifestations of it, must be established. In his 1961 publication *The Long Revolution* Raymond Williams identified culture in three strands:

... first, the 'ideal', in which culture is a state or process of human perfection, in terms of certain absolute or universal value. The analysis of culture, if such a definition is accepted is essentially the discovery and description, in lives and works, of those values which can be seen to compose a timeless order, or to have permanent reference to the universal human condition. Then, second there is the 'documentary', in which culture is the body of intellectual and imaginative work, in which, in a detailed way, human thought and experience are variously recorded... Finally, third, there is the 'social' definition of culture, in which culture is a description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behavior. The analysis of culture, from such a definition, is the clarification of the meanings and values implicit and explicit in a particular way of life, a particular culture. Such analysis will include the historical criticism always referred to, in which intellectual and imaginative works are analyzed in relation to particular traditions and societies, but will also include analysis of elements in the way of life that to followers of the other definitions are not 'culture' at all: the organization of production, the structure of the family, the structure of institutions which express or govern social relationships, the characteristic forms through which members of the society communicate.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Raymond Williams. *The Long Revolution*. (Westport, USA: Greenwood Press, 1975), 57.

It should of course be noted that Williams further explains that the concept of culture is not finite, and that there is no true 'ideal' definition of culture, which individuals can work from — the notion of culture is in flux, constantly changing. For the sake of clarity and efficiency these differing aspects are considered as 'the culture of the time' a period of societal and political hypersensitivity and suspicion which operatives must have considered and constantly engaged with during their training and missions over the course of the Second World War.

The challenges around the issue of culture are identified by scholars in other areas of research as well, for example policing, where similar concerns are at play. Within the context of surveillance and law enforcement Nikos Passas and Richard Groskin sum up this critical issue of cultural differences within surveillance in foreign locations: "Differences in language, customs... make single agency, aggressive investigations difficult to mount and sustain in foreign...environments."⁹¹ As evidence to this, within one of the training manuals of the Beaulieu section of the Special Operations Executive, an agent training base which was located in Hampshire in the UK, there is a section titled *Life of Agent in the Field*. In this manual the author writes that, "[an agent] must at once familiarize himself with new customs and slang

⁹¹ Nikos Passas and Richard B. Groskin, "International Undercover Investigations" in *Undercover: Police Surveillance in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Cyrille Fijnaut and Gary T Marx (The Hague, Netherlands: Kluwer Law International, 1995), 299.

which have arisen...He must particularly avoid English habits, e.g. eating with fork alone, leaving knife and fork on plate when finished, eating soup with side instead of point of spoon, tipping soup plate forward instead of backward, carrying handkerchief in sleeve, etc.”⁹² These issues are not exclusive to clandestine affairs either. Nadine Holdsworth echoes these same aspects in her monograph *Theatre and Nation*, stating that, “throughout history people have constructed group formations to distinguish ‘us’ from ‘them,’”⁹³ and although this is being considered in relation to theatrical institutions it provides support to the assertion that Passas and Groskin make, along with the observations by the anonymous author of the training manual, which assists in initiating the bridging between theatre and military espionage. This well-investigated notion of ‘difference’ in the context of culture is the critical departure point which this chapter seeks to utilize.

Training Methods

After the establishment of the Special Operations Executive, this department in turn began the task of creating training camps to prepare agents for subversive work. The archival documentation indicates that there were four steps to the training process before arriving in occupied territory.

⁹² *SOE course at Beaulieu*, 1 January 1941, KV 4/172, The Security Service: Policy Files, The National Archives, Kew, London, UK,

⁹³ Nadine Holdsworth, *Theatre & Nation*, (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 9.

Each of these stages was affiliated with a school, and these schools were given the designation of STS (an acronym for Special Training School) and were separated by the three stages of subversive training: Preliminary School, Paramilitary School and finally Finishing School, the fourth stage was a final briefing location— typically London—where agents would receive their last orders before being sent into the field.

Unfortunately, much information surrounding the training programs, missions, and results, whether successful or not, is unavailable—an issue that is broached in the discussion of archives the third chapter of this project. However, as identified by historian Denis Rigden in *How To Be A Spy: The World War II SOE Training Manual*—an edited volume almost entirely composed of numerous SOE training manuals gleaned from the National Archives, Kew, in London—substantial information on STS103, often referred to as ‘Camp X’ and located near present day Whitby, Canada, is available. Rigden has incorporated many of these facts, as well as the information retrieved from the British National Archives in London into his edition. The composition of ‘Camp X’ was unique among overseas training facilities in that it provided both preparatory and specialist training regiments which mirrored the work that was done within the United Kingdom in multiple locations, while at the same time offering a whole program within one specialized facility.

Each of these schools had specified directives guiding their work. Rigden, in his introduction to the book, provides the following synopsis to identify the focus of each of these institutions: “[With]in the Preliminary

Schools the student's character and potential for dangerous clandestine work were assessed without revealing to them much about what SOE did... [the] syllabus covered physical training, weapons handling, unarmed combat, elementary demolitions, map reading, field craft, and basic signaling... the sort of training that any army recruit might expect to receive."⁹⁴ Paramilitary schools were a more intensive specialized version of this training, focusing on "physical training, silent killing, weapons handling, demolition, map reading and compass work, field craft, elementary Morse, and raid tactics."⁹⁵ Finally, finishing schools were, perhaps, the most important in the process of becoming an undercover agent. Having passed basic assessments within each of the previous stages potential students were informed about the realities of the SOE and what their training was truly preparing them for within the context of war. It is in these finishing school's locations where students would begin their focused 'theatrical' training.

The Schools themselves were separated into five departments identified with letters 'A' through 'E' and departments A and B are the most relevant to this chapter. 'A' was dedicated to the instruction of agent technique which included procedures for clandestine life, personal security, clandestine organization, communications, as well as the creation and maintenance of cover or how to *act* while under surveillance, and how to handle the interrogation process. Department 'B' focused on conducting

⁹⁴ Rigden, *How To Be a Spy*, 2.

⁹⁵ Rigden, 5.

exercises and role playing, which assisted agents in practicing the techniques learned in Department A, such as discreet meetings, communication, interrogation, etc. Departments 'C' to 'E' were more specific to the understanding of enemy forces, the execution of propaganda, and the use of codes and ciphers amongst other areas.

As Rigden notes, the SOE required many specialists in various training areas. When possible agents returning from missions would provide information to keep records up to date since experience in the field was valued above all else. However, as mentioned before, it is known that at least for the instruction of disguises and the execution of cover stories the SOE did in fact employ at least one actor to guide instruction – Peter Folis. As Bernie Ross identifies in his article for the BBC; “His mantra was, 'When thinking disguises don't think false beards, instead make small changes to your appearance; wear glasses; part your hair differently; take a different gait.’”⁹⁶ Here Folis, an actor, was instructing the trainees in the techniques needed to validate a personal performance, and in the art of camouflaging oneself in public.

Following this, what should be considered more in depth are the prevailing ideas of camouflage and concealment that are central to this examination and the relationship of camouflage to theatrical technique. In her

⁹⁶ Bernie Ross, “Training SOE Saboteurs in World War Two,” Factual: History, BBC, 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/soe_training_01.shtml.

book *Performing Ground: Space, Camouflage, and the Art of Blending In* Laura Levin explores the concept of camouflage as a performance practice. Tying together historical notions of mimesis, art, and camouflage she provides a background from which to depart. It is her explanation of the intertwining of mimesis and camouflage that has most greatly contributed to this chapter. Levin writes: “I am drawing my understanding of mimesis from philosophers like Caillois [...] Walter Benjamin, and Theodor W. Adorno, who treat mimesis as ‘the way an organism adapts itself to its environment.’”⁹⁷ This quote from Levin helps tie together the importance of understanding the ways in which Folis and his contemporaries instructed agents to adapt to their environment or changes of circumstance, and how it relates to theatre and performance.

The manuals were explicit in their belief of how agents should conceptualize camouflaging oneself. In the SOE training manual—the section of the syllabus concerned with disguises and that Folis likely dealt with—the instructors address alterations of physical identity, camouflage and concealment and began with the following in their explanation:

Definition of Disguise.

- a) It does not mean covering your face with grease paint and hair.
- b) It must have at its basis the art of being and living mentally as well as physically in this new role. The important thing to remember is to be the person you are portraying mentally first and then afterwards physically. Therefore – EXTERNAL IMITATING BY ITSELF IS NOT SUFFICIENT. By this we mean imitating the external part of a character

⁹⁷ Levin, *Performing Ground*, 11.

only i.e. the walk, the voice, the manners and individual abilities etc. of the character. External imitation without proper mental preparation must mean you speak and do things mechanically without fully realizing who you are, where you come from, why, what you want, where you are going, what you are supposed to be and do when you get there, etc. You will therefore be nothing but an external caricature and easily caught out.⁹⁸

The relationship between espionage preparation and actor training can already be seen here; instructors were evidently utilizing simple theatre terminology within their preparation of students through manuals, requesting the agent to go beyond a superficial cloaking of themselves and ‘live’ and ‘be’ their identity. Further to this point, within the portion of the training manual entitled *Points to Be Considered in Your Disguise* the very first ‘Golden Rule’ as identified by the authors is the statement “Never come out of character. By this we mean not only from the clothes point of view but from the mental side also, E.g. if you are a workman do not wear a white collar and black tie, have clean hands and behave like an educated man.”⁹⁹ Herein lies another connection to world of theatre and performance. The invocation of the term ‘character’ places these initiatives squarely within the realm of theatre and the act of being an identity that is different from one’s own.

Often the writers of the manuals invoke narratives to emphasize points. Of the many anecdotes that are provided in the training manuals to reinforce the theories being taught, one of the more well-known followed a lesson that

⁹⁸ Rigden, *How to Be a Spy*, 52.

⁹⁹ Rigden, 52.

stressed an understanding of cultural and societal differences and changes, and was regarding an operative who had recently landed in France. Undercover, the agent entered a café and requested a café noir (black coffee) as his drink. Through improper preparation and awareness, the agent revealed his foreign identity. Milk was being rationed and locals assumed that all coffee would be served without milk and only ever requested 'coffee'.¹⁰⁰ It is a detailed analysis of the ever-changing culture that agents must have conducted in order to be an effective asset in the war effort. Not only did this apply to agents who were citizens of unoccupied countries such as the British, Canadians, or Americans, but also recent immigrants in unoccupied Allied territories, first generation citizens or individuals seeking shelter during the conflict such as Dutch, Polish or French citizens. Many individuals chose to risk their safety as operatives within their home territories which they had left, and the issue of cultural camouflage was just as critical for them as it was for an agent who would be imitating a foreign language, culture, and identity.

Williams' third notion of culture encompasses a broad range of 'cultural aspects' from art to everyday events to a particular way of life. If this concept is considered in the context of World War II, particularly occupied territories within Europe, then the culture of suspicion and scrutiny, a large part of the day-to-day existence of these besieged societies, must be a part of this definition. This idea then extends to the requirement of a natural citizen of

¹⁰⁰ Ross, "Training SOE Saboteurs".

occupied nations operating as an agent for the SOE to 'act' as though they are not a part of clandestine operations. The training supplied by the Allied forces was not only appropriate to foreigners of the target nations, but those who volunteered to return to their home-nation as agents.

Unfortunately, little seems to be known about the background of Folis and therefore about the details of his theatrical experience. Yet, it is known that Folis was heavily involved in the instructional process, and even his statements concerning disguises and concealment alone (not to mention many others within the archival documents along with their obvious appropriation of theatrical terminology) serve to strengthen the inherent relationship between the training of espionage agents and theatre practitioners. To understand which techniques Folis may have brought to his instructional methods it is important to now shift for a moment and delve into the training methods of acting during and leading up to the Second World War.

Inter-war Conservatism

The period between the First and Second World War was a radical time of cultural evolution. As Maggie Gale explains in her publication *British Theatre Between the Wars, 1918-1939*, "The social and economic shifts which followed in the wake of the First World War are perceived as having greatly affected British society but not necessarily British theatre. Interwar theatre has traditionally been seen as conservative and as somehow failing to

reflect the cultural upheavals which surrounded it.”¹⁰¹ What Gale further explains is that this perceived conservatism is a short-sighted assessment of inter-war theatre in United Kingdom, which, in fact, experienced significant upheaval and included new developments in acting technique. More importantly Gale points out that the changes that are witnessed in Great Britain at this time were intrinsically tied to the flux in social, political and artistic endeavors. One way the better ways to understand how the British-led espionage efforts were conceived is to focus on the development of acting theories that were most prevalent in the United Kingdom in and around the Second World War. The goal is that with this short overview, evidence and insights will emerge to help identify which acting techniques may have been used to train espionage agents in their creation of a new identity for covert work.

Both actors and instructors (in some instances these are the same people) were critical to the developments that took place. What is worth noting is that during this period of significant upheaval, the United Kingdom experienced an incredible influx of international practitioners arriving in the country to, not only present their work, but hone their skills and instruct others in their art-forms. Within the overview the we will conduct shortly, brief descriptions of some of the pedagogical practices that were being employed during this time-period will be provided. Along with the theories behind the

¹⁰¹ Maggie B. Gale, “Introduction” in *British Theatre Between the War, 1918-1939*, ed. Clive Barker and Maggie B. Gale, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 1.

instruction this chapter will also look at the format through which they were communicated, since both theory and practice are critical to clarifying these issues.

It must be acknowledged that there is an underlying bias towards the early 20th century in the United Kingdom. As stated, this section of the chapter is directed towards establishing a brief overview of actor training techniques during the inter-war period, but this line of inquiry is entirely dedicated towards a western style of acting. Where it is possible, attempts have been made to gesture towards other practice that may have influenced these 'western-centric' techniques. While the research to date indicates that the actor training employed by the Allied forces originates in the United Kingdom, it is entirely possible that this is not the case.

The period of social and political turbulence following the First World War lead to the entrance of new practices into the theatrical market. It is at this point that the arrival of some of the more notable practitioners and instructors of realistic and naturalistic forms of acting can be identified. Indeed, there are many practitioners who could be considered for this paper, however, focus will be placed on the following four: Konstantin Stanislavsky, Michael Chekhov, Michel Saint-Denis and Joan Littlewood. These practitioners have been selected due to their interest in establishing instructional systems or processes for achieving a believable and engaging acting style rooted in realism and naturalism in the lead-up to the Second World War.

Methods and Systems

Konstantin Stanislavsky—From Stories to Manuals

Of the four practitioners mentioned Konstantin Stanislavsky may be the most well-known. In the anthology *Actor Training* Sharon Marie Carnicke sums up what is perhaps the most famous aspect of this man, that he was “the first practitioner in the twentieth century to articulate systemic actor training.”¹⁰² Stanislavsky’s name is also no stranger in the world of theatre publishing, his work is a pivotal moment in the history of acting. Publications exploring his work range from the actor training guidebook written and published by Stanislavsky himself, entitled *An Actor Prepares* and first published in English in 1936, to countless publications on his work and those he has influenced, such as *Stanislavsky In Focus* also written by Carnicke and compiled from personal notes, letters and texts.^{103 104}

Jean Benedetti, the late Professor and Director of Rose Bruford College, dedicated much of his career to documenting the work of Stanislavsky and produced an exhaustive selection of works focusing on this

¹⁰² Sharon Marie Carnicke, “Stanislavsky’s System: Pathways for the actor” in *Twentieth Century Actor Training*, ed. Allison Hodge, (London, UK: Routledge, 2000), 13.

¹⁰³ Konstantin Stanislavsky, *An Actor Prepares*, (New York, USA: Theatre Arts Books, 1948).

¹⁰⁴ Carnicke, Sharon Marie. *Stanislavsky in Focus: An Acting Master for the Twenty-First Century*, 2nd ed. (London, UK: Routledge, 2009).

legend of theatre such as: *Stanislavski*; *Stanislavski: An Introduction*; and *Stanislavski and The Actor*.^{105 106 107} These comprehensive investigations into the theories Stanislavsky himself developed provide evidence of the influence that this practitioner and pedagogue's ideas have had in the world of both theatre and actor training. What Benedetti repeatedly asserts is that Stanislavsky's work is so pronounced that it often forms the central reference point during the analysis of other theatre practitioners. Indeed, in his publication *Art of the Actor* Benedetti does exactly this, not only devoting an entire chapter to Stanislavsky's work, but also using him as the reference point for his explanation of other practitioners.¹⁰⁸

Yet, what is perhaps most curious about the work of Stanislavsky and his connection to the United Kingdom is that the man himself only briefly visited Britain a handful of times, but still has had an enormous influence on the training of future actors. Further to that, there is a significant portion of work of the practitioner-instructor that has been ignored. As Carnicke writes in the introduction to her essay in *Actor Training*; "Our common knowledge

¹⁰⁵ Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski*, (New York, USA: Routledge, 1988).

¹⁰⁶ Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski: An Introduction*, (London, UK: Methuen, 1982).

¹⁰⁷ Jean Benedetti, *Stanislavski and the Actor*, (New York: Routledge/Theatre Arts Books, 1998).

¹⁰⁸ Jean Benedetti, *The Art of the Actor: The Essential History of Acting, from Classical Times to the Present Day* (New York, USA: Routledge, 2007).

generally associates the Stanislavsky System with the twentieth century's infatuation with psychological realism on stage. However, a closer look at the full trajectory of his life and work offers much of value. [...] For example, his long-overlooked interest in Yoga dovetails with current curricula in many acting schools, and his holistic view of psychology anticipates groundbreaking discoveries in cognitive science which impact on acting."¹⁰⁹ This perspective echoes the position put forward by Clive Barker: that to understand the context of a time-period it is utterly important to understand the events preceding it.¹¹⁰ This is imperative in both the effort to understand the crossover not only between espionage and theatre, but also between iterations of theatre and actor training systems from outside of the Great Britain and their influence on countries who composed the Allied Forces of WWII. What Carnicke's research shows is that styles, techniques, and approaches were borrowed from across the world to enhance and refine acting practices, and Allied espionage agents did this as well. While the Second World War was arguably the industrialization of espionage, the First World War was in many ways the great learning period of clandestine affairs. Moreover, if espionage does indeed borrow readily from theater it was also inheriting a system that was willing to explore other methods of approach.

¹⁰⁹ Carnicke, "Stanislavsky's System," 1.

¹¹⁰ Clive Barker, "Theatre and Society: the Edwardian legacy, the First World War and the inter-war years" in *British Theatre Between the War, 1918-1939* ed. Clive Barker and Maggie B. Gale, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 4.

This could help explain the seemingly disjointed nature of the training manuals that were produced by the SOE, which at points seem to lay out contradicting approaches to agent-training.

Stanislavsky's instructional technique is by many accounts what brought him notoriety. *An Actor Prepares* employs a unique mode of teaching the reader how to employ the strongest methods for training as an actor.

Carnicke explains; "Stanislavsky's effort to 'systemize his art in writing was far from easy. Acting, like riding a bicycle, is easier to do than to explain. No wonder acting is more effectively taught in classrooms than through textbooks. In order to surmount this difficulty, Stanislavsky chose to write his manuals as if they were 'the System in a novel.'" ¹¹¹ As it is identified by Carnicke, the mode of disseminating the technique was to produce a piece of written text which could be read by anyone. She explains that "He thus creates a fictional classroom to portray, rather than explain, the process of acting. He introduces characters who struggle to act well, and their teacher who struggles to help them. Stanislavsky puts his characters into changing contexts which continually challenge their ideas about what it meant to act." ¹¹²

This Socratic technique is partially the reason for the significance of Stanislavsky's far-reaching influence. In addition to that, this particular approach to actor training and its well-known success established a standard

¹¹¹ Carnicke, "Stanislavsky's System," 16.

¹¹² Carnicke, 16

which all other forms of actor instruction would be compared against, as we saw with Benedetti's work.

The impact Stanislavsky has had on actor training systems should not be ignored or underestimated. Nor can the similarities between the method of 'manual-writing' that both Stanislavsky and the instructors of agent-training employed. Not only do these two approaches rely on anecdotal communications to drive home the important points, but both employ a technique of narrative through publication to instruct others. While the narrative used by Stanislavsky was the central focus of his work, the SOE employed narrative in its instruction sporadically throughout the manuals. Though there are certainly similarities, it should also be noted that there are distinct differences. For example, unlike Stanislavsky's approach the agent training methods did not employ a Socratic method in their efforts to further central arguments and theories. Likewise, the system of instruction argues against improvisation when undertaking field-work whereas Stanislavsky did not. What should be understood is that while significant cross-over exists between the work of Stanislavsky and those preparing clandestine agents in the Second World War, certain divisions exist as well.

Michael Chekhov—Acting as Another

Unlike Stanislavski, Michael Chekhov was at one point a resident of the United Kingdom. As the nephew of the famous author and playwright Anton Chekhov, Michael was well-exposed to theatre throughout his life. Indeed, his

original training lineage is firmly rooted in his experience with Konstantin Stanislavsky during his time at the Moscow Art Theatre. His move to the United Kingdom was in part due to the rise of Stalin's power in 1928 (although this could have also been due to the collapse of his career in Russia, not unrelated to alcoholism). While Chekhov was a supporter of some of Stanislavsky's practices, his admiration ran only so deep. As Benedetti explains to his reader in *The Art of the Actor*, "He did, however, harbor certain reservations about Stanislavsky's methods, in particular that every action should be 'true' and performed as in life."¹¹³ What Benedetti alludes to is the draw of naturalism that kept hold of Chekhov alongside the increasingly prominent realism. Likewise, it is a sign of his interest in training methods that were not focused on replicating real-life, but instead tapped into actions and ideas that were beyond the scope of 'naturalistic' acting, such as the ideas of 'floating' and 'flying' in physical rehearsal processes.

After a successful re-birth of his career, a tour of the United States, and well-received productions in the United Kingdom, Michael Chekhov was invited to join an experimental arts community at Dartington Hall in Devon in 1936 where he might be able to put into practice his theories on actor training while working with students. His divergence from Stanislavsky, while not drastic, was substantial enough. In his chapter on Michael Chekhov "Michael Chekhov On the Technique of Acting" in *Actor Training* Franc Chamberlain expands on this pointing out that "Chekhov comes out most strongly against

¹¹³ Benedetti, *The Art of the Actor*, 149.

Stanislavsky's use of personal experience and emotion, arguing that this, in effect, binds the actor to the habits of the everyday self, which was not the way to liberate the actor's creativity."¹¹⁴ For Chekhov there was significant importance in the creative process informing the establishment of character. Another difference that Chamberlain identifies is that "Chekhov argued that the emphasis should be on the character's feelings, not the actor's [...] and that this would enable the actor to transform into the character, rather than reducing the character to the personality of the actor."¹¹⁵ Such an understanding is insightful for an investigation into instructional techniques in acting alongside those for espionage training. This divergence from Stanislavsky is an assertion that the character and the performer are not one and the same – somewhat of an inversion of the technique Stanislavsky advocated for. This position could be seen as a sign of the influential developments that psychology was having on actor training as it was being devised. A third area where Chekhov diverged from Stanislavsky was his embracing of improvisation techniques. While Stanislavsky strongly argued against engaging with improvisational training, Chekhov embraced it.

Regarding the creation of a system of actor training, Chekhov developed approaches that leaned into the exploration of the imagination. While his publication *To the Actor* was written in 1942 (though not published

¹¹⁴ Franc Chamberlain, "Michael Chekhov On the Technique of Acting" in *Actor Training*, ed. Allison Hodge, 2nd. ed. (London, UK: Routledge, 2010), 64.

¹¹⁵ Chamberlain, 65.

until 1953 in part due to the war) it is well-known that Chekhov had developed roughly eighty-seven exercises in the lead up to his original manuscript, which was republished in 1991 under the title *On the Technique of Acting*.^{116 117}

Chamberlain provide a brief overview of some of the more central ideas and exercises, these include topics around “imagination and concentration,” “atmosphere,” and “[t]he psychological gesture.”¹¹⁸ Each of these areas was meant to address a core issue of actor training through a comprehensive explanation and exercises to put theory into practice.

Among the most relevant to the exploration of espionage training atmosphere and the psychological gesture might be included. As Chamberlain further elaborates, “an atmosphere can be considered as the dominant tone or mood of, amongst other things, a place a relationship, or an artwork. An old ruined castle, for example, has a different atmosphere from a busy casualty department, and each atmosphere will have a different effect on individual in contact with them.”¹¹⁹ This might easily be extended to the idea of cultural context which is hinted at within the training manuals. Indeed, it is evocative of the issues that Passas and Groskin acknowledge and can be applied further to the cultural context of suspicion during wartime existence.

¹¹⁶ Michael Chekhov, *To the Actor: On the Technique of Acting*, (New York, USA: Harper & Brothers, 1953).

¹¹⁷ Michael Chekhov, *On the Technique of Acting*, ed. Mel Gordon, (New York, USA: Harper Perennial, 1991).

¹¹⁸ Chamberlain, “Michael Chekhov,” 86-89.

¹¹⁹ Chamberlain, 87.

The notion of the psychological gesture also echoes aspects of the training manuals developed by the SOE: “The psychological gesture (PG) is a mean of expressing the entire character in a condensed form through an intuitive grasp of the character’s main desire.”¹²⁰ There is seemingly little difference between what a character might desire in contrast the actor, versus what an agent might desire versus their fictitious character. Even the terminology evoking the idea of ‘acting objectives’ (admittedly shared with Stanislavsky) would indicate crossover. Parallels can also be identified in Chekhov’s appreciation and encouragement of physical training beyond the everyday rituals and routines of the ‘lived reality’, which often define Stanislavsky’s work.

Clearly though, espionage-training—as much as the evidence points out—does not centralize the idea of imagination. Nor do many of the training techniques entirely translate to clandestine affairs. For instance, Chekhov’s rumination on the ideas of “Preparation” and “Sustaining” seem to have very little cross over with espionage efforts.¹²¹ Likewise, the idea of “Composition” and “Rhythm” are less likely to find support in clandestine efforts. However, like Stanislavsky, the system developed by Michael Chekhov should be considered as a possible area from which training techniques could have been appropriated.

¹²⁰ Chamberlain, 89.

¹²¹ Chekhov, *To the Actor*, 128.

Michel Saint-Denis—French Connection/United Kingdom

Michel Saint-Denis is the third practitioner, as well as the third ex-patriot, featured in this short analysis. Jane Baldwin's introduction to her book *Michel Saint-Denis and the Shaping of the Modern Actor* paints the picture of an influential, larger than life instructor whose theories and techniques have proven to be far-reaching and timeless. "At the height of his career, the director, teacher, and theatrical reformer Michel Saint-Denis was a leader in the field whose work was respected, admired, and closely followed. [...] The five major theatre schools he founded profoundly affected and improved theatre practice, particularly acting."¹²² His association with the establishment of the London Theatre School, The Old Vic, École supérieure d'art dramatique, The National Theatre School of Canada, and the Julliard Drama program, only reinforce this position. However, as Baldwin explains to her reader, "[h]e remains a pervasive influence, but an unrecognized one, his achievements scarcely remembered except by his few remaining colleagues, former students, and scholars of twentieth-century British theatre."¹²³ His pursuit of a technique and mode of instruction to train an actor in a holistic model provided students with the opportunity to experiment with various forms of performance as a way of developing a well-rounded acting technique.

¹²² Jane Baldwin, *Michel Saint-Denis and the Shaping of the Modern Actor*, (Westport, USA: Praeger, 2003), 1.

¹²³ Baldwin, 1.

His career began while studying under his uncle, the famed theatre director and instructor, Jacques Copeau at his celebrated art theatre the Vieux-Colombier in Paris. As Baldwin illuminates for us in the edited volume *Actor Training*; “These years with Copeau were critical for Saint-Denis’ artistic development. His uncle imbued Saint-Denis with an ideal of theatre, taught him the craft of theatre by example, and shared with him his ideas, goals, doubts, and the results of his explorations.”¹²⁴ Such access to an influential practitioner/pedagogue quite likely had an impact on Saint-Denis and his eventual transition to instructing actors. Moreover, Copeau’s own open-minded theorizations on actor pedagogy seems to have affected Saint-Denis significantly and informed his holistic approach.

After leaving Copeau’s institution Saint-Denis performed professionally before aiding in establishing ‘Copias’, a troupe of performers trained by Copeau and based in Burgundy. While Copeau was initially involved in this group, his early exit allowed Saint-Denis to fill the void of instructor/performer/director in his absence. It is here where scholars assert that he began to diverge from his uncle’s way of thinking. Over the next five years Michel Saint-Denis toured extensively throughout Europe until the disbanding of the Copias in 1929. Upon returning to Paris Saint-Denis helped establish the Compagnie des Quinze, which he directed and toured with over the course of another five years. Though the company was unable to draw

¹²⁴ Baldwin, 82.

large crowds to their performances in continental Europe, the United Kingdom proved different. It was an invitation by Tyrone Guthrie to instruct at a theatre school in London that brought Saint-Denis to the United Kingdom in 1935, where he would remain for much of his career.

Saint-Denis was interested in establishing a holistic style of performance training. His program encouraged students to explore “gymnastics, movement, music, mime, mask work, mask modelling, and improvisation... They trained both autonomously and collaboratively. An actor might conceive a character and develop it privately before bringing it to the group for suggestions and criticism. At other times, a performer or performers generated an idea for a group improvisation that all researched and rehearsed... This close collaboration resulted in a strong ensemble.”¹²⁵ While an appreciation for the importance of physical training, particularly in respect to developing an acting pedagogy, certainly aligned the work of Saint-Denis with Chekhov, the distinguishing quality of Saint-Denis’ instructional style is that it is not prescriptive to one particular manner of executing work. Herein would be another linkage with the training methods of the SOE. The instructional tactics provided to Allied espionage agents was a constantly evolving process, as new information was gathered it would be incorporated into the syllabus.

While Michel Saint-Denis never produced an instructional manual/guide to actor training before the advent of the Second World War, his techniques

¹²⁵ Baldwin, 82.

had been in development long before his publication of *Theatre: The Rediscovery of Style* in 1960. In this publication, Saint-Denis traces through his process of instruction and draws on his work at The Old Vic that in turn was modelled after his pedagogical practices at The London Theatre School, which pre-dates World War 2. He explains that his manner of instruction required an initial assessment period of students followed by the introduction of the training regime; “the training itself could be divided into three main parts – cultural, technical, and a central section which was concerned with improvisation and interpretation.”¹²⁶ Here the potential crossover with SOE training methods can be identified. With Saint-Denis, the concern with cultural instruction was focused on, among other areas, the “wearing of costumes, handling of period properties (for example, swords, fans, snuff boxes), movement and dance related to the manners of the period, (for example, curtseys, bows, etc.); and music.”¹²⁷ This is very similar to the cultural awareness and training tactics that would be used by the SOE. Likewise, the technical know-how of bodily control and use of instruments was a central concern for Saint-Denis and his instructional faculty. Courses on Movement, Language, and Improvisation could likewise prove a rich ground for the SOE to appropriate techniques of instruction. Indeed, even the initial assessment period at the beginning of the tenure is evocative of the training conducted at

¹²⁶ Michel Saint-Denis, *Theatre: The Rediscovery of Style* (Kingswood, UK: The Windmill Press, 1961), 98.

¹²⁷ Saint-Denis, 100.

the Preliminary Training Schools. So too is the decentralized nature of instruction. Yet, as is the case with Stanislavsky and Chekhov, it is hard to identify Saint-Denis as the exact individual whose system was used to model agent-training methods. What an analysis of Saint-Denis provides is a broader understanding of the holistic and evolving nature of actor training that was beginning to flourish around this time.

Joan Littlewood and Collective Instruction

A self-described 'vulgar woman of the people' Littlewood was born into poverty in Southeast London in October of 1914. Having been accepted to the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, she was apparently dissatisfied with the instruction she was receiving and abruptly quit before completion. Upon moving to Manchester she began to work in the repertory system of the theatre in United Kingdom. Over the course of her career she journeyed between socially engaged theatre groups until establishing a company known as 'The Theatre Workshop'. While the establishment of this company falls outside of the scope of this paper, since its inception was not until 1945, the development of Littlewood's career in the lead up to establishing this group falls within the studied timeline. More importantly, the development of her career through the 1930's was central to her establishing the mode through which she trained performers, and it was in the inter-war period where she began to experiment with training techniques, some of which were encountered and enhanced by other actors in the pre-war period.

While Littlewood's influence is understated, but not ignored, she differs from the other practitioner/pedagogues by the fact that she never articulated a system of actor training, nor did she ever propose to be in search of one. As Clive Barker writes, "[t]he unfortunate result of Littlewood's reluctance to set down her working methods and their theoretical backing has been that she has been accused of being a dilettante who somehow managed to hit the right button on some occasions – which is a long way from the truth."¹²⁸ Such suggestion seems to stem from both Littlewoods reputation of being a communist sympathizer (for which she was banned from the BBC for a period) as well as her abrasive and 'low-class' demeanor.

Unlike the previous three practitioner/pedagogues, it is a little more difficult to piece together the style or technique Littlewood sought to establish. Barker echoes this perspective and points out that "[t]he evidence for Littlewood's theory lies in snippets of statements in interviews and manifestos and in the memories and anecdotes of the actors who have worked with her; although these documents, which include this chapter, have to be questioned carefully, and seen as both idiosyncratic and subjective."¹²⁹ Such evidence is difficult to find. Not only did Littlewood and her associates evade establishing a formula for actor training, their political involvement, pacifist views, and concern for social well-being manifested itself in a series of 'theatre

¹²⁸ Clive Barker, "Joan Littlewood", 130.

¹²⁹ Barker, 130.

movements' which they established through manifestos and then quickly moved on from.

What is known is that upon moving to Manchester in the 1930's. Littlewood began to collaborate with Ewan MacColl, an agitprop theatre practitioner in Salford. Being an industrial center, trade unions were well represented in the audiences for who MacColl and his colleagues performed. Their movement titled *Theatre of Action* sought to engaged with the working class audience. They performed scenes and sketches related to the industrial work so many of the spectators labored in. Howard Goorney's *The Theatre Workshop Story* is an insightful guide to anyone interested in the work of Joan Littlewood. In his in first chapter '1929-1936 The Grassroots' he quotes the Manifesto of the Theatre of Action, which stats that "[t]he theatre, if it is to live, must of necessity reflect the spirit of the age. This spirit is found in the social conflicts which dominate world history today."¹³⁰ What is apparent in Goorney's publication is the central concern the group had with reaching a wider audience through their work in the 1930's. Such interests pushed their performance into the realm of realism and naturalism to increase communication and spectatorship, which is arguably the manner of actor training that the SOE would be most interested in. By 1936, and with Littlewood leading the effort, the Theatre of Action had transformed into the

¹³⁰ Howard Goorney, *The Theatre Workshop Story*, (London, UK: Eyre Methune, 1981), 11.

Theatre Union—a more politically engaged organization that at its core advocated an egalitarianism; a significant aspect of her instructional style.

Much like Saint-Denis, Littlewood was not particularly interested in establishing a singular form of instruction or actor training. The source material used by both she and her colleagues was global and came from the United Kingdom, continental Europe, North America, and Asia. As Barker notes, “they took in the concepts of the ensemble, as the creative instrument of making theatre, and the concept of the research theatre company. Companies such as those led by Copeau, Stanislavsky and Meyerhold consistently researched the history of theatre practice from whatever sources were obtainable and through practical recreations and experimentation.”¹³¹ The interest Littlewood possessed regarding performer accessibility was consistent with her interest in social access. It also centered on her belief that performer training required a variety of approaches.

More intriguing still is the manner through which such information was disseminated amongst group members. “Each actor was allocated a period or style, being expected to produce papers and lectures, to communicate his or her understanding to the others. All this apart from the personal research of Littlewood and MacColl.”¹³² Such methods are a distinct departure from previous pedagogues. While each of the preceding practitioners in was interested in instructing others, none were seemingly as interested in taking

¹³¹ Barker, “Joan Littlewood,” 132.

¹³² Barker, 132.

instruction. Here lies the major distinction of Joan Littlewood from Stanislavsky, Chekhov, or Saint-Denis: an open-minded humility that enabled her instruction to continuously evolve. No artist's technique was off-limits, Stanislavsky, Chekhov, and Saint-Denis were all investigated and instructed.

While there are certainly similarities between the work of Littlewood and the SOE, there are also many signs that her work was unlikely to have had significant impact on the Allied efforts. For example, the fact that Littlewood's approach to actor training wasn't formally cemented until 1945 would indicate that her techniques were not broadly known in the lead up to the war. Likewise, her connection to communist activists would likely have raised suspicions with the top brass of the SOE. Yet while doubts do exist, Littlewood should not be completely disregarded. As noted earlier, Littlewood's work in the years leading up to WWII was already beginning to have impact in theatre circles and it is entirely plausible that some of her methods were adopted by individuals like Peter Follis. The greatest crossover between Littlewood's work and the efforts of the SOE seem to be the broad approach to work, and the ability to incorporate other training and cultural perspectives. Rosalie Williams evidences this in her reflection on her time with Littlewood: "I was interested in movement, having studied dance as a child, and on my first day, Joan introduced me to Laban's theories of movement, something I'd never heard of."¹³³ The similarities being training programs also exist in the adaptability of the curriculum put forward by both

¹³³ Goorney, *The Theatre Workshop*, 20.

Littlewood and the SOE. On a final note, knowledge Littlewood's impact is increasing and points to her influence being much more pronounced than previously thought. This alone warrants future investigation.

Conservatism Revisited

In working through just four of the practitioners of this time-period it would be safe to say that there are easily identified similarities between acting pedagogy of the 1930's and the agent-training methods of the Allied Forces. It also suggests that Gale's assessment of British theatre during the inter-war period is accurate; and while it has "*traditionally* been seen as conservative and as somehow failing to reflect the cultural upheavals which surrounded it," this is certainly not the case.¹³⁴ Even if this assessment were deemed to be true in its regard to the dramatic literature of the time, the development of acting techniques between the First and Second World War were dynamic and revolutionary. The landscape of British theatre at the time aids in the development of actor training methods and the possibility of cross-pollination with the efforts of the SOE. With the passing of the First World War British society was desperate for a new form of theatre. Due to the influx of people entering the country, the theatre scene was ripe for the development of new styles of performance and performer training. And with these open borders came influences from abroad. From Konstantin Stanislavsky to Joan

¹³⁴ Gale, "Introduction," 1.

Littlewood, the pedagogical practices for communicating such techniques have had a long-lasting influence in the world of theatre. Yet these brief overviews of actor-training methods do not serve this chapter fully. It is critical to consider the theatre of the time more broadly, and to simultaneously conduct a more in-depth side-by-side analysis of an actor-training technique and the SOE agent-training technique to illustrate these points further.

The Theatre of the Time

Throughout the reading, training, and seminars delivered by the SOE, authors and lecturers provided constant reminders about the necessity of preparing a character/cover story in the most in-depth manner possible, as the earlier quotation regarding disguises demonstrated. In a particular portion of one training manual the author presents an anecdote on the failure to remain 'living mentally and physically as the character entirely'. The author writes:

The assumed name must be learnt thoroughly and be so ingrained that the Agent responds automatically to it and NOT to his real name. He must also sedulously practice his factitious signature. A most experienced Agent in France, arriving late and very tired at an hotel, filled in the usual arrival form at the Bureau and went straight to bed. Just before going to sleep he suddenly became aware that, although he had printed his assumed name in block capitals at the head of the form, he had inadvertently signed his real signature at the foot. As he had the foresight to ascertain at what time the Police collected the registrations in the morning, he was able to get away before they arrived."¹³⁵

¹³⁵ "SOE course at Beaulieu," A.5.

Such evidence corroborates the requirement that living as authentically as possible was clearly essential in the work being undertaken by operatives. Certainly, an understanding of the tenets of realism was of primary significance both for espionage instructors and their agent trainees. It meshed with the notion of mimesis as part of the working definition of camouflage.

The idea of mimesis critically aligns the efforts of artistic work with other disciplines. Cited in the first chapter of this project, Potolsky's *Mimesis* provides a condensed and informative view on the subject and as he clearly establishes within his introduction "Mimesis describes the relationship between artistic images and reality: art is a copy of the real."¹³⁶ In this undercover case, the 'image' can be understood as the attempted character, which the agent establishes, along with the identity they assume. Operatives would invent a version of the 'real' to perform for the society they intended to infiltrate including the political establishment in power. Levin in *Performing Ground* makes a similar allusion equating camouflage to scenic practices. She asserts that, "[it draws] together the complex strands of this developing interdisciplinary conversation, [and] makes an argument for reading camouflage as a performance strategy, as a theoretical frame for analysing contemporary performance practices and the performance of self in everyday life."¹³⁷ Following this, camouflage considered as performance practice is

¹³⁶ Potolsky, *Mimesis*, 1.

¹³⁷ Levin, *Performing Ground*, 5.

easily tied to work like espionage and aids in blurring the distinctions between art and life.

With theatricality as an inherent aspect of camouflage, the context of mimesis within theatre traditions is even more important. If we recall from the first chapter, Potolsky writes the following about mimesis as it applies to theatre: “Theatrical metaphors [...] figure mimesis as a representation for someone, and not only, a representation of something else. They highlight what theorists have called the ‘performative’ quality of mimesis, its explicit address to or dependence upon an audience.”¹³⁸ Thus it seems that the production of performance in everyday life, of a realistic character by an agent, and intended for viewing by the infiltrated society, the audience, is fulfilling exactly these requirements. The urgency of maintaining a quality ‘performance’ by an agent was governed by the hyper-suspicious attitudes of the political office in power, and subsequently the public at large. In this context, Levin and Potolsky’s writings offer us a useful framework and reinforce the distinction that imitation is not the same as replication.

The Special Operations Executive archival evidence strengthens this position and, as quoted earlier, states that mere imitation was an unacceptable method to utilize; only through living and being the ‘character’ could one truly be an effective agent and convince others of one’s (false) intentions. Potolsky links these ideas of mimesis and performance to acts

¹³⁸ Potolsky, *Mimesis*, 74.

within everyday life, and cites the influential work of Erving Goffman.

“Goffman argues that all social interactions are akin to performances, based on a fundamental division between actor and audience, and between a self that potentially knows it is acting and the character it plays. The aim of these performances is to engender ‘the impression of reality’, to persuade an audience that the act is sincere. No less than for stage acting, the aim of social acting is mimesis. Failure to play a role, or playing it poorly, will come across as a breach of decorum.”¹³⁹ While agents were not playing ‘themselves’ in a subconscious manner, as in the case of Goffman’s research, they were straddling a barrier in which they must appear to be totally natural, while being fully conscious of the significance of their actions at all times. To do otherwise would have been catastrophic for an agent.

Knowing that the SOE were working towards a systematic training of operatives, who would live as the characters they created, and that preparations for agents were taking place within the late 1930s suggests an historical commonality with the writing of any number of the earlier mentioned practitioners, as well as others who were not identified in the brief overview. Following this, it is worth speculating that the origins of the training approaches utilized by the SOE could have been found in aspects of any number of writings provided by practitioners/pedagogues. To push forward the argument about such similarities and crossover, the work of Konstantin Stanislavsky will be used. Yet, before touching on some of the commonalities

¹³⁹ Potolsky, 89.

between the SOE agent training methods and Stanislavsky's actor training theories, it should be noted again that at present there is little evidence to support that Stanislavsky's system was the direct model which the SOE utilized in their training methods. With the understanding that Stanislavsky's famed publication *An Actor Prepares* had been translated and published in London by 1938 it is conceivable that Peter Folis and his contemporaries could have been introduced to this work preceding WWII and employed Stanislavsky's techniques in their instruction. But at present this must remain speculative.¹⁴⁰

Stanislavsky, as is well known, sought to establish a process through which he could instruct and prepare actors for their roles onstage. Although moving on to explore other areas of artistic expression and investigation, it was this 'process' so sought after for which he became most well-known. In her essay "Stanislavsky's System" Carnicke sums up the primary philosophical positions of Stanislavsky. Those which demonstrate a close relationship to agent training include the following: the **Psychophysical**, "the belief that mind and body represent a psychophysical continuum."¹⁴¹ As

¹⁴⁰ It should be noted that British performers as well as entrepreneurs were reasonably familiar with Russian theatre practices. Although Stanislavsky's seminal work, *An Actor Prepares* appeared in English in 1938, his autobiography *My Life in Art* had been translated in 1924. Moreover, the British theatre more generally had seen the work of Michael Chekhov who had set up a theatre school in 1936 and Fyodor Komisarjevsky who had been noted for his London productions of Anton Chekhov's plays since 1921 and his productions of Shakespeare in Stratford until 1939.

¹⁴¹ Carnicke, "Stanislavsky's System," 16.

Stanislavsky asserted; “In every physical action there is something psychological, and in the psychological, something physical.”¹⁴² **Immediacy of Performance**, “However well-rehearsed, Stanislavskian actors remain essentially dynamic and improvisatory during ‘performance ’” and yet the performer must “...[exist] fully within the immediate moment [...]He describes this state as [...] when the actor is seized by the role. The Russian word carries many different nuances amongst them ‘to experience’[...] ‘to live through.’”¹⁴³ ¹⁴⁴ **Communication**, “For Stanislavsky, there can be no ‘drama’ without interaction... Words are one vehicle for such interaction... but hidden beneath words is subtext... Actors communicate subtext through non-verbal means (body language, the cast of eyes, intonations and pauses).”¹⁴⁵ **The Method of Physical Actions**, “In this method, the actor discovers and then performs the logical sequence of physical actions necessary to carry out the inner, purposeful actions of the scene.”¹⁴⁶ Included in this is “The score of physical actions, [which] includes many external moves and strategies that the actor needs to carry out the overarching purposeful action (events of the

¹⁴² K.S. Stanislavskii, *Sobranie sochinenii, vol. 2 [An Actor’s Work on Himself, Part I]*, (Moscow, Soviet Union: Iskusstvo, 1989), 258, quoted in Sharon Marie Carnicke, “Stanislavsky’s Systems: Pathways for the actor” in *Actor Training*, ed. Allison Hodge, (London, UK: Routledge, 2010), 17.

¹⁴³ Carnicke, 8.

¹⁴⁴ Carnicker, 12-13.

¹⁴⁵ Carnicke, 12.

¹⁴⁶ Carnicke, 26.

scene).”¹⁴⁷ And finally, **Active Analysis**, “In active analysis, actors grasp a play’s anatomy before memorising lines. To do so, they read a play as if it were a system of clues that imply potential performance... Stanislavsky calls these clues the *facts* to which actors accommodate performance.”¹⁴⁸

These aspects of the far larger and more complex method that Stanislavsky proposed are each replicated in some capacity by the instructional manual of ‘Section A’ within the SOE finishing school. What can already be identified, even during a cursory reading of archival documents, is how these concepts would fall into the process of training an agent for the creation and execution of a character. However, the question remains, what particulars existed within the training manuals and their relationship to the sections of Stanislavsky training referred to above?

Manuals of Instruction

In the process of instructing an operative on the manner of creating an identity the SOE provided a fairly formulaic approach as an excerpt from the instruction manual provided by the SOE to agents suggests: “Your cover is the life which you outwardly lead in order to conceal the real purpose of your presence and the explanation which you give of your past and present. It is

¹⁴⁷ Carnicke, 26.

¹⁴⁸ Carnicke, 18.

best considered under the heads: Past, Link between Past and Present, Present, and 'Alibis' [sic]."¹⁴⁹

'Past' was divided into the categories of: a) Identity, b) History, c) Documents d) Clothes and Effects, e) Change of Appearance, and f) Final Search.¹⁵⁰ The subsection of **Identity** was split into sections each of which had their advantages and disadvantages identified for the agent. The three choices of approach to establishing an identity were: i) Your Own ii) That of a Real Person, Distant or Dead, iii) Wholly Fictitious.¹⁵¹ The manual from Beaulieu Camp further explains these ideas within the description of 'General Cover'; "An agent can adopt one of three identities... The probabilities are that it will be the latter, despite the danger of carrying Identity papers which, however perfect in form, are not recorded at their alleged place of origin... This danger can sometimes be averted by choosing a place of origin where the archives are known to have been destroyed."¹⁵²

The second subsection of 'Past' was **History** and this emphasized the need for realism and strategy in the establishment of the character by the agent; "Whatever your identity, your story must be plausible and not indicate any connection with subversive activity."¹⁵³ The manual further suggests that

¹⁴⁹ Rigden, *How to Be a Spy*, 46.

¹⁵⁰ Rigden, 46-48.

¹⁵¹ Rigden, 46-47.

¹⁵² "SOE course at Beaulieu," A.4.

¹⁵³ Rigden, *How to Be a Spy*, 47.

any of the three approaches to identity should be based on personal history and facts as much as possible.

'Documents' can easily be equated with 'Props' from the stage and as a category "documents" was the third subsection of 'Past'. These items reaffirmed the previous two aspects of identity for any investigating force. The manual recognizes that for each of the previous identity categories (Own, Real Person, Fictitious), documents would provide certain obstacles and benefits, such as accurately forging an identity card for a totally fictitious individual.¹⁵⁴

Clothes and Effects, much like the aforementioned 'documents', emphasized the need to utilize only appropriate clothing for the role being enacted, and should support the history of the character in question.¹⁵⁵ Similar to the way a member of the creative team of a theatrical production would work to establish appropriate attire or costume for a performer, so would the operative. And if circumstance allowed it, their supervisory officer would also work to make choices to support their new persona. The subsection heading, **Change of Appearance** raised the issue of 'looking the part', while differentiating this from Clothes and Effects by emphasizing the

¹⁵⁴ Rigden, 47-48.

¹⁵⁵ Rigden, 48.

need to keep supporting features consistent, such as rough hands for an individual posing as a workman.¹⁵⁶

Lastly, **Final Search** identified the necessity of maintaining the façade of a character whenever circumstances change, such as the event of changing one's cover story or concealing recent covert activity.¹⁵⁷ This is reminiscent of Stanislavsky's belief, mentioned earlier, that even in living as a character, the performer will constantly be required to be able to improvise within the guise of their identity, but adjusting to the circumstances in which they might find themselves.

Under the secondary aspect of establishing a cover story 'Past to Present' was condensed into a fairly self-explanatory area of instruction. This was the act of tracing a believable line from the cover story/character 'Past' to 'Present'.¹⁵⁸ This included the research required to have knowledge about a particular region, possess items from other locations used within backstory, and "build up your present cover background by innocent and inconspicuous actions to which reference can be made later... make innocent acquaintances, etc."¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ Rigden, 48.

¹⁵⁷ Rigden, 48.

¹⁵⁸ Rigden, 48-49.

¹⁵⁹ Rigden, 49.

The 'Present' was defined as "the life which you lead and the 'story' which you will tell about that life to account for your presence."¹⁶⁰ Operatives were not always provided with assistance in preparing such a cover story, for instance, when evading detection after having their cover blown and revealed to be an agent. In these moments, the clandestine performers were required to manufacture another identity through their own initiative. What was fundamental to all agents was that "[their] ostensible present must be consistent with [their] alleged past."¹⁶¹

The 'Present' was divided into three sections to consider a) Maintenance of Cover further separated into: i) **Name** described as "Signing correctly and responding immediately,"; ii) **Consistency** which was clarified as "Your personality and general conduct must fit your cover story [...] Documents, clothing possessions, etc. must be suitable. Manners tastes, bearing, accent, education and knowledge must accord with your ostensible personality," a reemphasis of the realism that this work required); and iii) **Concealment**: "Avoid foreign words, tunes, manners, etc. Avoid slang which has developed among your countrymen in Britain. Avoid showing knowledge or expressing views acquired in Britain. Conform with all new conditions which have arisen, observe new customs and acquire the language which have developed in your country."¹⁶² The SOE provided another useful and

¹⁶⁰ Rigden, 49

¹⁶¹ Rigden, 49.

¹⁶² Rigden, 49.

demonstrative anecdote to re-emphasize these rigid orders of concealment in the following: “An agent landed in an occupied country made himself undesirably conspicuous through asking a farmer, carrying milk to the neighboring town, on the first morning of his arrival, for a drink, in a locality in which the disposal of milk had recently been absolutely prohibited except through a licensed dairy to the holder of a ration card.”¹⁶³ The last two aspects of ‘Present’ were b) Cover Occupation where again it was emphasized that consistencies must be taken into consideration when choosing an occupation; and c) Conclusion – a warning to the operative on just how complex creating an effective cover story and character were.

The final area of instruction regarding the creation of a cover story was the process for manufacturing an Alibi. Creating a successful Alibi was crucial to the maintenance of a cover story/character. Although this process was dependent on the circumstances that the agents found themselves within, the SOE provided a strategy for guiding the process. This consisted of two aspects, the nature and construction of the Alibi. **Nature** was explained as follows: “In addition to your cover background, you must have an explanation ready for every subversive act, however small e.g. conversation, journey, etc. Such alibis are more important than your background cover, if they are good no further enquiries will be made.”¹⁶⁴ The **Construction of the Alibi** was

¹⁶³ “SOE course at Beaulieu,” A.8.

¹⁶⁴ Rigden, 50-51.

itself divided into eight aspects: Plausibility, Detail, Self-Consistency, Cover Background, Truth (emphasizing that this area should be as close to truth as possible) Dead End (projecting a sense of finality), Consistency with Other, and Discreditable Story.¹⁶⁵ What should be emerging is that the relationships between these briefly introduced elements of the instruction manual and theatrical training of Stanislavsky, and more importantly the quest for realism in clandestine work, are immensely suggestive of SOE operations having theatrical roots.

The following are just a few instances where there is considerable crossover between the methods being instructed by the Special Operations Executive and the approach which Stanislavsky sought to establish.

Psychophysical, as was introduced earlier in the chapter, was present within the first stages of instruction at the Preliminary Schools in that students were assessed for their psychological and physical states. Secondly, through observation students would be gauged on their ability to work within the field. Thirdly, in the paramilitary schools students were trained in hand-to-hand combat and routinely put through the rigors of physical interaction, altercation and retaliation—all governed by yet more psychological assessment. Fourthly, within Section B of the Finishing schools, operatives were exposed to mocked up circumstances intended to assess their mental reaction and application of training to staged interrogation, compromising circumstances,

¹⁶⁵ Rigden, 51.

and routine stops by police and military. Regarding **Immediacy of Performance**, the SOE stressed that students must prepare in advance for changing scenarios depending on which clandestine work they were engaged with, on whether their cover was blown and when they had to create a new identity for themselves. **Communication** is seen in the emphasis on the plausibility of the event, and the effective communication required to achieve and maintain the façade. We can view the addressing of **Physical Actions** in the identification of agents needing to eradicate their natural movements and actions and re-articulate themselves with the actions and movements of the new identity. Lastly, **Active Analysis** was present in the active event of identifying, dissecting, constructing and acting of identities, and covert tasks.

As noted repeatedly, Stanislavsky is not the only acting pedagogue whose work can be related to techniques used by the SOE. It could be argued there is more in common with Michael Chekhov's ideas working well with his assertions that an actor should not be portraying how 'they' would react to dramatic events, but how the character would experience the world.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, the emphasis that Chekhov places on 'atmosphere' of situation and location, as a consideration any performer should make, relates well to both Williams earlier explanation of culture, and the SOE declaration that agents must familiarize themselves with the cultural state of the occupied territory they will be infiltrating.¹⁶⁷ Certainly Chekhov's presence in the United

¹⁶⁶ Chamberlain, "Michael Chekhov", 60.

¹⁶⁷ Chekhov, *To the Actor*, 48.

Kingdom at Dartington Hall, beginning in 1936, along with his already well-established international presence makes a case to consider his work as one of the possible foundations for agent training.¹⁶⁸

Although British mainstream theatre had always been suspicious of foreign influences, and existing schools of actor training tended to preserve many of the verities of 19th century theatrical practices, by the commencement of World War Two British actors had become aware of new training methods available to them and audiences had been exposed to new artistic directions even in the production of works by Shakespeare. Michel St. Denis formed his London Theatre Studio in 1936 almost exactly at the same time as Michael Chekhov's studio. He too was very familiar with the work of Stanislavsky. Nonetheless any direct connection between the work of these studios and SOE training methods must remain speculative. Indeed, such speculation might also investigate the possible input of Basil Dean who, after a theatrical career and as a film producer and a founder of Ealing Studios, had been appointed head of Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA) from 1939. He was fully conversant with the value of propaganda. This, however, calls for further investigation especially of the competing

¹⁶⁸ On the impact of Russian actor training methods upon British theatre, see Jonathan Pitches, "Tradition in Transition: Komisarjevsky's seduction of the British Theatre," and David Shirley, "Stanislavsky's passage into the British Conservatoire," in Jonathan Pitches ed. *Russians in Britain: British theatre and the Russian tradition of Actor Training*, (London & New York: Routledge, 2012).

systems of actor training and their relationship to the archival documentation and literature of World War Two clandestine history.

Chapter 3 - The Archive: A Methodological Challenge

“The spy obtaining intelligence occupies a position symmetrical to that of the archivist (or, increasingly, the artist) retrieving archived material.”

- Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, “Intel”

Assessing the Archive

My experience in the archives researching materials for this project was in many ways an average experience. However, this is not how I envisioned it unfolding. When I first entered the United Kingdom’s National Archives to begin my archival research on espionage I expected any number of events to take place. I thought I might be stopped, turned away, or possibly brought into a back room where I would be questioned before being led out of a hidden exit into a waiting government car and then taken off to some unknown room to be interrogated. This, I can assure you, did not happen. Yet even so, through the process of visiting and returning to the archives it slowly dawned on me that I was beginning to engage in a repeat, or perhaps better described as durational, performance. My techniques of research were transformed in the process of searching for materials that had been deliberately hidden or destroyed, and whose hiding and destruction had been officially sanctioned. I became aware of my inclination to disguise my investigation, to craft my inquiries so as not to arouse suspicion, to view others in the archives with wariness, to watch from the periphery for

opportunities of access to present themselves, and to cobble together shrewd methods for gaining access to materials. My research techniques became a performance that replicated the undercover practices I was searching for. It was scholastic inquiry transformed into clandestine undertaking. It was the romanticism of espionage infecting my academic search, and an assumption about the archive and the ability to gain access to it. It was the aura of espionage transferred to the archive.

I will start this chapter off with three questions. What does it mean to go into an archive looking for something? How does one know when they have found something of relevance? And how does one know when they have encountered a roadblock? Regarding other areas of study, these questions have been broached by countless scholars whose work is perhaps far more reliant on the accessing of archives than my own research project—or at least accessing ‘archives’ in a traditional sense of the word. Elizabeth Yale’s article “The History of Archives: The State of the Discipline” succinctly explains the history of archives and works through the speculated origins in agrarian societies requiring records for grain stores, and concludes with contemporary perspectives on archival practices. Her suggestion that “rulers accruing power through their control over resources invented the archive as a mechanism for consolidating and reinforcing that power”¹⁶⁹ directly aligns archives with the identified goals of espionage. But more relevant to this

¹⁶⁹ Elizabeth Yale, “The History of Archives: The State of the Discipline,” *Book History* 18 (2015), 332.

project is her suggestion that “the fracturing of archives in war and violence inserts them into the national histories—the stories a nation tells itself about who it is—in new ways.”¹⁷⁰ Espionage employs violence. This was established in the first chapter and I would suggest is intuitive for most people. The theatrical techniques appropriated by espionage enable such violence. If espionage is viewed as a form of theatre, then we might view theatre to be violent as well. I am not writing about stage violence in a theatrical production, although that is clearly violence in its own right. What I am describing is the violence used to upend trust, ethics, and morals. This violence can be physical, insinuated, psychological, and even metaphorical. If we take what Yale says to be true, that violence and war insert themselves into the archive, we can suppose that espionage likely does as well. This makes Yale’s later statement all the more eerie. She writes that “though information masters [...] might have wished them so, archives [are] not transparent windows onto the past.”¹⁷¹ In the way that espionage inserts itself into the narrative, so too are its techniques of obfuscation, opacity, deception, violence, misdirection, and more, inserted into the narratives communicated in the archive. They also find their way into the practices of archiving and accessing the archive.

A central tenant in any archival research process is that materials cannot assumed to be truthful, that they are merely information. This is no

¹⁷⁰ Yale, 342.

¹⁷¹ Yale, 342.

different for espionage materials. What is found in the espionage archive is only information. But information about what? In espionage and other intelligence practices information is typically referred to as 'intel'. Where this intersects with Yale's suggestion, that war and violence, and by extension espionage, are inserted into the archive, is how we frame the information or intel found in the archive and how we must go about accessing it. In his chapter "Intel" Geoffrey Winthrop-Young identifies that "the conditions under which we speak of information in terms of intel involve conflict, subterfuge, secrecy, betrayal, treason, and espionage."¹⁷² We cannot divorce the intel collected from archives by scholars, journalist, and historians from its role in intelligence and espionage practices, and its associated violence and deception. As Winthrop-Young would identify, there is no neutrality in this information, even though we might wish there to be. Likening it to the neutrality of Switzerland, which is dependent on the storage of money and the production of arms for its political neutrality, "both of which inevitably find their way to wars abroad,"¹⁷³ Winthrop-Young argues that so too does espionage intelligence and information, and by extension its archive, return us back to espionage techniques. He adds that "as [intel] crosses boundaries of secrecy, enmity, and public accessibility, some formerly classified intel may

¹⁷² Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, "Intel," in *Information* ed. Jonathan Abel, Samuel Frederick, and Michele Kennerly, (New York City, USA: Columbia University Press, 2021), 111.

¹⁷³ Winthrop-Young, 110.

be converted into news while other portions end up as archival material.”¹⁷⁴

And this, as the quote at the beginning of the chapter indicates, aligns the spy with the role of an archivist, and perhaps even an artist.¹⁷⁵ If we conclude that espionage and its spy-archivist-artists are governed by acts of subterfuge, deception, misdirection, and more, then we must also conclude that accessing the archive of espionage is also governed by such qualities.

In my own experience of accessing the archive, I had no identifiable problems. I entered and exited like every other researcher. My presumption going into the archives, which I imagined is shared by those first looking at intelligence archives, was that if I were ‘on to something’ I would only know it when I ran into roadblocks. My belief was that a researcher of espionage does not know if they have found important information until other people start paying attention. The romanticism was again infiltrating my understanding of the archive and my investigation. I imagined that I might be intercepted at the entrance to the archives one day, or perhaps two people would appear beside me and ask me to come with them to some other part of the building. Less nefarious, I imagined I might receive an email issuing a cease and desist, or a statement from an anonymous government official who had determined that I was looking at classified materials and that I should discontinue my research. Like with my gaining access to the archives, this did not happen.

¹⁷⁴ Winthrop-Young, 110.

¹⁷⁵ Winthrop-Young, 110.

But does my ease of access indicate that there is transparency from governments when concerning intelligence materials? Not likely. As Hughes and Scott explain in their chapter “Knowledge is never too dear: Exploring intelligence archives,” beyond the usual limitations and challenges of archival research, intelligence archives pose a secondary problem to the researcher due to “the inherent secrecy of the activity of intelligence.”¹⁷⁶ The issue is that at times intelligence agencies, recognizing their own reliance on archives and information, and indeed being an archive and archivists themselves, block access, deny that materials exist, retroactively reclassify materials, and even manipulate the archive that they made accessible to the public. These are the very techniques of espionage used against those who wish to learn more about the practices. They are repeated acts of violence committed against the public and its institutions. Compounding the issue is the problem addressed by Matthew Connelly in his subchapter “State Secrecy, Archival Negligence, and the End of History as We Know It”. In his text, Connelly illuminates the crises befalling the National Archives of the United States and their attempts to act as a repository for government materials, all while negotiating issues of transparency, material volume, and public indifference. As Connelly describes it, the issue is a “collapse in funding for declassification and the growth in the number of classified documents that require review [that] have had a

¹⁷⁶ R. Gerald Hughes and Len Scott, “Knowledge is Never Too Dear: Exploring Intelligence Archives,” in *Exploring Intelligence Archives: Enquiries in the Secret State*, ed. R. Gerald Hughes, Peter Jackson, and Len Scott, (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2008), 13.

predictable impact on the amount of information released to the public.”¹⁷⁷

This degrading of oversight and financial support has a serious impact on public accessibility, which is an extension and indicator of democratic practices. More importantly for a study of espionage, this reality enables the duplicitous techniques of espionage that infiltrate the archive to flourish due to a lack of scrutiny and oversight. How then, some might ask, do these issues manifest?

Let us first consider the issue of blocking information and the bizarre process of retroactive classification. As Jonathan Abel explains in his article “Do You Have to Keep Secrets? Retroactively Classified Documents, The First Amendment, And the Power to Make Secrets Out of The Public Record,” through retroactive classification the government of the United States can initially release “information in a non-classified form and only later decide to classify it.”¹⁷⁸ In these instances the government opens a part of their archive to the public for access, only to intervene in the public archive later, and subsequently appropriate and transfer materials back into their classified and exclusive domain. The compounding absurdity of this is that in the digital age, this has been undertaken even when materials have been widely distributed

¹⁷⁷ Matthew Connelly, “Secret State, Archival Negligence and the End of History as We Know It,” in *The Perilous Public Square* ed. David Pozen (New York, USA: Columbia University Press, 2020), 292.

¹⁷⁸ Jonathan Abel, “Do You Have To Keep Secrets? Retroactively Classified Documents, The First Amendment, And The Power To Make Secrets Out Of The Public Record,” *The University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 163, No. 4 (2015) 1039.

on the internet. Not only has this technique been used to stymie both journalists and scholars, but members of the United States Congress have also been affected by these practices—even when their role is ostensibly to conduct oversight of intelligence agencies.¹⁷⁹ At certain points in recent history, files have literally been transferred to the National Archives, copied by researchers, and then removed and returned to Intelligence archives, with researchers being informed that they are now in possession of confidential intel.¹⁸⁰ In fact, Abel cites statistics that document the retroactive classification of 25,000 National Archives materials between 1996 and 2006.¹⁸¹ In this regard, researching the intelligence archive comes with the distinct possibility of locating relevant documents one day, and the next day being denied access. Or as the sleight-of-hand performance phrase goes, and as Abel quotes, “Now you see it. Now you don’t.”¹⁸² In this sense, some of my concerns about the archive seem to be founded, since the intelligence archive is liable to be a continuously disappearing and reappearing repository. I could one day enter the archive and my materials would no longer be provided to me for an indefinite period.

¹⁷⁹ Abel, 1044.

¹⁸⁰ Abel, 1043.

¹⁸¹ Abel, 1046.

¹⁸² Abel, 1038.

Even though I was provided with my materials each time I requested them at every archive I visited, and even though the materials I sought were never subjected to retroactive classification, I still encountered other roadblocks and small acts of violence unique to the intelligence archive. For example, I am still skeptical about the historical accuracy of the materials I have found. This suspicion is not unwarranted. As Hughes and Scott note, the historian Richard Aldrich has demonstrated “how a generation of British historians was manipulated to conceal crucial aspects of wartime British intelligence and provide a distorted and misleading portrayal of the Allied conduct of the Second World War.”¹⁸³ To put this another way, the British Government and its intelligence agencies employed a theatrical technique of deception in manipulating the archive to rewrite history. This deliberate and strategic corruption of the intelligence archive instills suspicion into research and archival investigation. Is what I am seeing real? Or am I being manipulated here?

Yet another issue of the intelligence archive is the blocking of access. While mechanisms of access such as Freedom of Information Acts certainly exist, there are also problems. For example, as Murphy and Lomas address in their article “Return to Neverland? Freedom of Information and the History of British Intelligence” the relatively new UK Freedom of Information Act, passed in the year 2000, allows researchers to “cast further light upon British

¹⁸³ Hughes and Scott, “Knowledge is never too dear,” 14.

intelligence and security history, despite the exemption of the agencies themselves from the provisions.”¹⁸⁴ Yet even with the glimmers of information that are released, the process effectively constitutes the “equivalent of Oliver Twist, asking for more of the same; that is, more of the documents that will be processed-selected, reviewed, summarized — prior to their release,” and always in the hands of the authorities, as Murphy and Lomas acknowledge.¹⁸⁵ This situation is likely familiar to many intelligence scholars working in democratic nations. This discretion, left to intelligence institutions, is often abused. As Connelly notes, in the United States “the CIA is also notorious for blocking the release of documents by other departments and agencies, but it is not the only one. The Department of Energy, for instance, has broad powers to keep documents classified if they might contain information related to nuclear weapons. It requires page-by-page review, and it double-checks the work of other departments.”¹⁸⁶ This also relates back to Connelly’s central point, that there is inadequate support for both declassifying, and challenging unnecessary classified status.

Even when materials are shared due to freedom of information requests being granted, there is also the strong possibility that many

¹⁸⁴Christopher J. Murphy and Daniel W. B. Lomas, “Return to Neverland? Freedom of Information and the History of British Intelligence,” *The Historical Journal* 57, No. 1 (2014), 286.

¹⁸⁵ Murphy and Lomas, 287

¹⁸⁶ Connelly, *Crisis in the Archives*, 287.

materials are redacted or 'sanitized' for security reasons. An excellent example of this is the fact that the documents concerning Kim Philby held by the FBI remain redacted. This even though Philby is long-dead and numerous books and films concerning his life and work have been produced, including a dubious autobiography written by Philby himself after he defected. A perfect example of the classified status issues identified by Abel, as well as the strange reality that befalls classification practices in the digital era, are found in a document detailing an exchange between W. A. Branigan and W.C. Sullivan in the Philby archive. Branigan, a specialist in Russian Intelligence, corresponds with Sullivan, the FBI director of domestic intelligence operations from 1961 to 1971, about the parallels of the Philby case and the narrative contained in the novel *Shadow of a Spy* (Figure 1).

Memorandum W. A. Branigan to W. C. Sullivan
 RE: BOOK REVIEW; "THE THIRD MAN"

conclusions such as his statement on page 136 that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) investigation showed Donald Maclean was handled by Arthur Adams during part of his stay in the U.S. In order to make this sound reasonable, the author refers to Adams as a KGB (Committee of State Security) agent when in truth Adams was a GRU (Soviet Military Intelligence) agent. Again on page 162 he states during the investigation of Colonel Rudolph Abel by the FBI, two witnesses identified a photograph of Philby as a person they had seen at Abel's studio in 1951. This, of course, is pure fiction.

There are several other instances in the book where the author exercises his imagination in order to make all the pieces of this case fit into his own preconceived notion of exactly how this case developed. The balance of the book tells the story of the flight of all three of these individuals behind the Iron Curtain, the death of Burgess, and marriage of Philby to Mrs. Maclean. It adds nothing new to the case.

THE AUTHOR:

Bureau files show that E. H. Cookridge, whose true name is [REDACTED], has written several books on espionage. [REDACTED] have previously told us that he prepares his books from overt sources such as newspaper articles and other publications. His most recent book was entitled "Shadow of a Spy" which purported to tell the story of George Blake, British intelligence officer who was a Soviet agent.

Figure 1. Correspondence between W. A. Branigan and W. C. Sullivan.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁷ Correspondence from W. A. Branigan to W. C. Sullivan, Page 30, Part 32 of 34, Cambridge Five Spy Ring, FBI Records: The Vault,

In the correspondence Branigan identifies the author of the novel as E. H. Cookridge. Yet the FBI have elected to blackout the authors true name, evidently deciding that this information needed to be protected. While this letter was written and redacted circa 1968, a quick internet search will show that E. H. Cookridge was the pseudonym for Edward Spiro. And this potentially remains classified information even today and its dissemination would possibly be illegal.

This issue is not limited to official paper archives either. If we broaden our understanding of archives, which we often do in theatre and performance studies, we can include any location that hosts past materials of espionage practices. We might, for instance, include Bletchley Park as an archive that has been emptied of its contents to foil snooping historians, scholars, and members of the public. In returning to the questions raised at the beginning of this introduction, when we think about the espionage archive we can begin to assume that a lack of materials means that we are on to something. In a sense the roadblock is the indicator of success. What a study of espionage exemplifies within the archival research world is the following: if we know nothing about a subject then that is the direction we must head in. The challenge of the archives of espionage is that they are curated by state

<https://vault.fbi.gov/Cambridge%20Five%20Spy%20Ring/Cambridge%20Five%20Spy%20Ring%20Part%2032%20of%2042/view>.

secrets, which in democratic nations are supposed to balance their secrecy with their obligations to the public.

Consider the following example as a tying together of the issues raised in this introduction. In September of 2017 I convinced a friend to join me on a drive to visit the former SOE training base located outside of Toronto, Canada, known as Camp X during WWII and now named Intrepid Park. It was a bright sunny day as we made our way out of the city, driving along with the traffic until we came to Stephenson drive and exited the highway. Our search for the park was more challenging than we first thought it would be and the lack of signage was noticeable. After a few wrong turns and consulting maps on our cellphones we finally arrived. There was no designated parking available, so we decided to leave our vehicle in a vacant space outside of the rough looking office building that hosts the local trade union chapter for Unifor. We began our walk and made our way towards a sign upon which was a map, listing several parks in the area and a brief explanation of the location and its historical significance. The sign read “In 1941, a spy training camp was established on this site by Sir William Stephenson (1896-1989) ‘the Man Called Intrepid’, the Director of British Security Coordination. Many secret agents were trained at the camp for spy missions in Europe during the Second World War. Among those was Ian Fleming, author of the James Bond spy novels.” Clearly there is, or at least was, an interest in elevating the status and memory of this place while capitalizing on people’s knowledge of James Bond. Yet, the lack of additional historical recognition was very apparent. Our

difficulty in finding this place, the spotty signage, the inability to park, seemed intentional. It is as if an attempt has been made to prevent people from finding this location. The park itself and its associated history seemed almost erased, which is exactly what the Canadian Government attempted to accomplish when they destroyed the training camp in the late 1960's.

This park is a covert landscape and in turn a site of performance and a performance in and of itself. By definition, we may also view it as an archive, like we did with Bletchley Park. It is an archive of past methods for training espionage agents, and an archive of the destruction the Government of Canada consciously undertook to eliminate the site because it was involved in classified/secret training. Its existence has been obscured in the interest of national security. This destruction is a form of redaction and leaves a black mark across the historical landscape. It is what we may call landscape redaction, and what is true of the landscape is also true of the archive—it is full of gaps, things that did not make it in, and pieces ostensibly destroyed or hidden away. These are performances of destruction, obfuscation, and manipulation. They entrench control, which we might surmise is to keep secrets intact and keep those who wish to expose such secrets away or unable to access intel. But we can also read performance. We can understand that there is a message to be gleaned. These performances of destruction, the emptiness of the archive, are the details of espionage that we can study.

In order to research materials for this project I was obligated to engage in an almost paradoxical process. A search for the things that would never be there to begin with. This is because the most informative materials of the espionage archive are the materials that have actively been eliminated from the archive or blocked from view. Moreover, the process of accessing the materials that do exist requires a navigation of the gate-keeping systems of both the archiving process and the counter-intelligence/counter-espionage systems that have infiltrated the archive. To conduct my research, I was required to have a mind-set that treated official claims with skepticism—a process that at times pushed the limits of accepted practice and would allow me to gather materials surreptitiously. I found myself questioning the motives of those researching beside me in the archive, deflecting questions at border crossings, and excavating the left-over sites of past physical archives. I looked for the information that was omitted, stared down the black lines looking to see the text underneath, and dwelled on the pages of historical training manuals that had large slashes of ink and lead drawn across them on the diagonal with the words “DESTROYED ON AUTH” with whatever authorizing code following, indicating their sanctioned destruction.¹⁸⁸ Although I may have imagined that my status at times was ‘persona non grata’ and that my questions or presence were met with suspicion, the very nature of the espionage archive employing espionage tactics legitimizes my perception. The changes in research technique began to extend to my digital

¹⁸⁸ “SOE course at Beaulieu,” Minute Sheet.

investigations. My queries morphed, I began closing all other websites to conduct internet searches, and I would avoid work while transiting in public spaces. Often it felt as though I was an infiltrator of the archives in which I was working, a scholar rendered agent. The challenge of research on espionage is infiltrating and accessing the archive, an archive that has been erased, hidden, manipulated, closed, and redacted. An archive that demands covert engagement and begets covert performance. This too is the work of a spy.

Infiltration

Infiltration of an espionage service is an infiltration of the archive. All information that an intelligence organization uses is contained within repositories to help plan for clandestine activities. These archives are so valued, and deemed so important and exclusive, that whole sections of counter-intelligence branches are devoted to the prevention of access and detection of external threats. In simple terms, there are traditionally two manners of accessing archival information. The first is when an external threat accesses the archive from the outside in. The second, and perhaps the more difficult to prevent, is from the inside out, where someone who has authorized access to the archive begins to share the information externally. This individual is what is often referred to as a 'mole'. A mole is an inherent threat to an intelligence service because they undermine the exclusive control of information that an espionage agency relies on. But curiously moles might

also be viewed as a positive sign by intelligence work. This is because the presence of a mole indicates that the intelligence agency is in possession of desirable information. Nonetheless, the mole needs to be ferreted out and disposed of to protect the integrity of the archive. There may be no case of a molehunt more famous than the actions of James Jesus Angleton of the CIA.

Following a series of defections and arrests on both sides of the Cold War in the 1960's, the assertion was made by a deserter from the KGB, Anatoliy Golitsyn, that the CIA had a mole within it. The person charged with the task of identifying and removing the mole was Angleton. A former counter-intelligence operative for the Italian theatre during the Second World War, Angleton rose through the ranks of the CIA until he was appointed as the head of counter-intelligence by Allen Dulles. As a part of his counter-intelligence efforts, and in response to Golitsyn's information, Angleton helped establish the Special Investigation Group (SIG) to weed out any infiltrators. In 1964, the molehunt began through an initiative partly designed by Angleton and with supervision shared by the CIA and FBI. The fervor and paranoia that came out of this initiative and gripped Angleton has gone down in infamy. Such was Angleton's desire to identify the mole that between 1964 and 1965 the FBI "seemed to follow more suspect CIA officers in the United States than they were following KGB agents."¹⁸⁹ This obsession of Angleton serves as a

¹⁸⁹ Ladislav Bittman, *The Deception Game: Czechoslovak Intelligence in Soviet Political Warfare* (Syracuse, USA: Syracuse University Press, 1972), 16.

reminder of the sheer amount of resources that counter-intelligence branches of espionage agencies have at their disposal. It also demonstrates how protected the archive is by those who rely on its information to plan their activities. Of the forty senior CIA officers that were suspects, fourteen were “examined closely.”¹⁹⁰ But the protection of the archive can come at a cost, as identified by the Angleton case-study. After nearly a decade searching for a mole Angleton was let go by then-director William Colby due in part to the implosion he was causing within the CIA.

Careers had been destroyed, and no moles found. Angleton’s reliance on a single defector—Golitsyn—was viewed as naïve and conspiratorial, bordering on crack-pot by many. Divisions began to emerge within the CIA establishment, and problems became so apparent that Angleton himself was accused of being the mole because of the destruction that was taking place. As one chief of the SIS remarked to author Philip Knightley about the “Angleton sickness [...] If one considers the dissension Golitsyn sowed in the CIA then one could theoretically conclude that he was the most effective agent the KGB even had.”¹⁹¹ What should be understood from this is that the archive and access to it has great implications for the functioning of espionage and counter-espionage practices. As does its protection. Perhaps most curious of all is that the legacy of protection by individuals like Angleton

¹⁹⁰ Jeffrey T Richelson, *A Century of Spies: Intelligence in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1997), 290.

¹⁹¹ Richelson, *A Century of Spies*, 312.

persist even after they are gone and thus affects any sort of academic research. For scholarship on espionage to proceed, the archive must once again be accessed. Yet suspicion, paranoia, and resistance to access are all built into the bureaucracy that creates barriers for individuals studying intelligence work. In many regards, this casts the scholar as a kind of infiltrator attempting to get hold of information to disseminate, and likens the scholar to an espionage operative. To understand how the archive affects espionage more broadly the chapter will turn to one of the most infamous case-studies of espionage and counter-espionage, an instance of infiltration that allegedly influenced Angleton and set him down his long path—the case of Kim Philby.

A Master Archival Manipulator

In early 1963, the British intelligence officer Harold Adrian Russell 'Kim' Philby, an SIS agent working as a journalist in Beirut, disappeared. Whether he left aboard a ship via the Black Sea, or travelled through Syria to Armenia, is debated by historians. But what is known is that on July 1st of that year it was confirmed that Philby had defected to the Soviet Union and set in motion the final reveal of what is perhaps the most infamous case of espionage and mole-work in the 20th century. A member of the Cambridge Five, Philby was the last of a group of British intelligence officers who were outed as Soviet operatives after being deeply imbedded in Western intelligence communities. Knightley explains in the introduction to the 2002 edition of Philby's

autobiography that “there never was a spy like him, and now, with the cold war over, there never will be.”¹⁹² This is arguably even more true with the advent of the digital age. Spy work of the analog era has changed. However, Philby’s story and actions are still relevant to considerations of espionage as theatre and performance; particularly what an understanding of ‘The Archive’ brings to discussions on both theatre and performance, and espionage.

Philby was born in 1912 in British India to Harry St John Bridger Philby and Dora Johnston. A graduate of Cambridge University, evidence suggests that he was recruited by the Soviet Union in approximately 1934. Throughout the Spanish Civil War, he acted as a journalist for *The Times*, a role he would play again immediately before his defection to the USSR. In 1940, he was recruited by the British Secret Intelligence Service or SIS (what then became MI6) and in three years had become the head of the anti-Soviet section, all while maintaining his ties to the Soviet intelligence services. As Knightly puts it; “so the man running British operations against the Russians was actually working for the Russians himself. No wonder so few British plans worked. No wonder so many Western agents who slipped behind the Iron Curtain were never heard of again.”¹⁹³ Undoubtedly Philby was a master deceiver whose success lay in his ability to maneuver undetected. His employment of theatrical and performative processes enabled him to do so.

¹⁹² Kim Philby, *My Silent War* (New York, USA: Grove Press, 1968), vii.

¹⁹³ Philby, viii.

Philby's rise through the ranks of the British intelligence services was itself an impressive feat of shrewd performance of allegiance and deception, but also due to an immense amount of privilege and class distinction that, even with his sympathies to communist ideology, provided him access to the intelligence services. Philby's deception was also not limited to impacting British intelligence services exclusively. In the late 1940's he was promoted to the position of liaison between the British SIS and Washington's CIA, which provided him with access to countless Western ally documents and plans. "The result: at the height of the Cold War, every move the West made against the Communist bloc was betrayed by Philby before it even began."¹⁹⁴ It was here where Philby could execute some of his most duplicitous acts, both towards Western allies but also fellow Soviet agents.

As it stands, historians are unsure as to how much information Philby and his fellow agents provided to the Soviet Union. What is clear is that "the only saving grace for the British is that the Cambridge spies were not fully exploited by Moscow Centre, simply because they appeared too good to be true. The Soviets were suspicious of the British secret services and wondered if Philby, Burgess, Maclean, and Blunt were actually SIS double agents intent on penetrating NKVD. None of the priceless intelligence they sent to Moscow was accepted at face value, unless confirmed by another source."¹⁹⁵ What

¹⁹⁴ Philby, viii.

¹⁹⁵ Terry Crowdy, *The Enemy Within: A History of Espionage* (Oxford, UK: Osprey, 2006), 304.

can be understood from this is that in so many ways suspicion is the great inhibitor of effective espionage work. The inability to discern who is who they say they are, is a critical problem. Moreover, when we are unsure of who someone is, or whose interests they represent, all information provided by these individuals is questioned.

Philby's downfall came with the FBI interception of encrypted Soviet messages between Moscow and New York. In an effort to protect comrades, Philby tipped off agents who would be found out through the decoding of the messages, allowing for Maclean and Burgess, fellow Cambridge University graduates, to defect. However, while he warned some within his circle of espionage, he also allowed others to fall—this allegedly included Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. While Philby was not outed entirely during the crackdown by the CIA and SIS, the defection of the British spies, particularly Burgess, cast a shadow over Philby and he never regained a position as prominent as before. The suspicion of Philby as a third agent was too great for him to be trusted again. In the late 1950's, and again under the cover of being a reporter, he was sent to Lebanon to conduct work for the SIS. With the defection of various Soviet agents to Western nations over the next four years Philby's cover was blown, and in 1963 he made the escape to Moscow.

The Espionage Archive

It has been well-established that the creation of 'the archive' is an inherently performative act. So too is the mining, reading, curating, and

reproducing of the archive. Furthermore, each act of access, (re)creation, and articulation by an individual or group produces more material for the figurative and, in many instances, real archive. This very notion is the core concept put forward by Diana Taylor in *The Archive and The Repertoire* who identifies that “[p]erformances function as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity through reiterated, or what Richard Schechner has called ‘twice-behaved behavior.’”¹⁹⁶ Working through the fundamentals of performance and these acts of transfer, Taylor suggests that at its core performance—within the broadest sense of the term—is governed by the archive and the repertoire: “the *archive* of supposedly enduring materials (i.e., texts, documents, buildings, bones) and the so-called ephemeral *repertoire* of embodied practice/knowledge (i.e., spoken language, dance, sports, ritual).”¹⁹⁷ The central point that Taylor puts forward is that the archive and the repertoire work in tandem fueling both new and re-executed performances—the repertoire informs the archive and the archive informs the repertoire. Archives might also inform archives as could repertoires inform repertoires. When taken outside of mainstream instances of theatre and performance studies, to, say, espionage, we can see that this dialectic quality of performance continues to exist.

¹⁹⁶ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and The Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in The Americas* (Durham, USA: Duke University Press, 2003), 2-3.

¹⁹⁷ Taylor, 19.

Bearing Taylor's position in mind, we should simultaneously consider how Michael Andregg's classification of intelligence workers within five areas—Collectors who gather information; Analysts who process information; Operators who “go places and do things” to get, and act on, information; Managers who organize the work; and Policy Makers who make decisions about intelligence work¹⁹⁸—might be viewed as builders of the archive. Because at its core the idea of intelligence work is really the gathering of information. Furthermore, Andregg's identification of intelligence roles can help us understand how, when considered through the lens established by Taylor, these individuals are *performing* a role and thus engaging with *the archive* and *the repertoire*. Of course, it would be short-sighted to suggest that each of these individuals engage exclusively with one area of work. It can be easily understood that there is a good potential for overlap in any of the endeavors. For instance, operators may need to act as collectors and analysts in their efforts, just as a manager might also fulfill the role of policy maker. In short, these performances do not exist in a vacuum and the mode in which these individuals engage with the archive and repertoire is worth exploring.

Operators are the people most often thought of as spies. They are the Kim Philbys of the world who are going to places, doing things, and generating/acting upon information or intel. Their performance is primarily

¹⁹⁸ Michael Andregg, "Intelligence Ethics," 52-53.

thought of as active intervention, but is also at times inactive or observational. As an example, and forgetting for a moment that Kim Philby was a double agent, Philby was sent to neutral Spain during the Second World War “on the basis of his knowledge of Franco’s Spain, an important battled ground in the intelligence war,” as Phillip Knightly documents in his biography on Philby.¹⁹⁹ In the previous decade Philby had served as a columnist (and intelligence operative of the Soviet Union) during the Spanish Civil War. His task of helping run the WWII counter-intelligence desk for the SIS, known then as ‘Section 5’, fits well within the parameters of an Operator. He was there to help facilitate the *doing* of things. What historians are fairly certain of is that in the process of *doing* and performing the role of counter-intelligence operator Philby impacted the archive of the SIS and in turn the repertoire of both the SIS and its agents. In a sense, he would act as a gate-keeper making choices about how to act on archived intelligence gathered through clandestine efforts. The manner through which this was done was in a constant state of being established and re-established by the British Intelligence Offices, along with their allies. This would include when to act on intelligence obtained from sources within the German military operating throughout Spain, and when to sit back and collect more information. Most relevant to this chapter would be the choice to intervene or to wait. These are choices concerned with how the archive might be impacted and acted upon. Each action or lack of action

¹⁹⁹ Phillip Knightly, *The Master Spy: The Story of Kim Philby* (New York, USA: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 101.

results in a series of events that add to the archive in a different capacity, which in turn affects the repertoire, and so on, and so forth. But to exclusively frame Philby as an Operator would be a limited understanding of his work, he also engaged with the roles of Collector and Analyst.

The Collectors and Analysts, as Andregg identifies the roles, are in many respects what we might call the curators of the espionage archive. One, the Collector, takes the information obtained and places it within the repository of intel, while the other, the Analyst, investigates the information to assess its value and what else might be learned, eventually entering new information into the archive as well. Here the constative generating quality of archives and repertoires identified by Taylor can be seen in action, since the act of analyzing produces new information which in turn will be analyzed, and so on. So too do Managers and Policy Makers act in a curatorial manner. For instance, managerial oversight dictates focus on what to analyze and what to collect, a more indirect affecting of the archive, but still impactful. Policy Makers, which Andregg suggests are mostly politicians (some with secret clearance some without; some with intelligence work backgrounds, some not) and are similar to Managers in that they establish the prerogative of intelligence operations.²⁰⁰ As it is with Managers, Policy Makers are often indirectly affecting the curatorial practices of the archive. It should also not be assumed that instances of curatorship within intelligence archives is a one-way system and that materials are exclusively obtained and condemned to

²⁰⁰ Andregg, "Intelligence Ethics," 53.

secrecy for eternity. The very nature of archives also requires that at some point they are weeded or have their collection refreshed. This can occur in at least two ways: in one capacity information that is no longer deemed viable or accurate might be terminated. In another manner, once information within the archive is not considered relevant and/or does not require secret treatment and is not necessary to protect, it might be made public—a sort of transition from one archive to another, i.e. private to public. I will return to this issue of secrecy and access shortly. What is more critical at this juncture is to see the theories in practice.

Arguably, any case of espionage that is revealed publically can provide some insight into how Operators, Collectors, Analysts, Managers and Policy Makers work, and how the efforts of any of these performers might stray into the realm of another individual's mandate. Philip Knightley provides a series of cases that illustrate how Philby proved his value to the British SIS during his stint in Spain over the course of the Second World War, which was shared by Philby to Knightley through a several interviews conducted in the months before his death. In one narrative, entitled “The case of Admiral Canaris”, Philby recounts the planning of a potential assassination attempt that was to be carried out against the head of the Abwehr (the Nazi-Germany military intelligence unit), Admiral Wilhelm Canaris. Philby explains that he was provided with intel that indicated Admiral Canaris would be travelling from Madrid to Seville, with a stop overnight in the small town of Manzanares—a town Philby knew well from his time as a journalist during the Spanish Civil

War. Because of his knowledge of the town—what we might term as his personal archive—Philby surmised that Canaris would stay at the Parador, a small but relatively upscale old-world hotel. The suggestion was put forward to the head of the SIS, General Sir Stewart Menzies (often referred to as “C”), to assassinate Canaris by lobbing two grenades into his bedroom. As Philby explained to Knightley “Cowgill [then head of Section 5] approved and sent my memo on up to ‘C’. Cowgill showed me the reply a couple of days later. Menzies had written: ‘I want no action whatsoever taken against the Admiral’. Sometime later I had the occasion to see ‘C’ and I remembered the memo and raised it with him. I said ‘Chief, I was puzzled by your decision over this. Surely it was worth a go?’ Menzies smiled and said: ‘I’ve always thought we could do something with the Admiral’. It was only later that I learnt he was in touch with Canaris via a cut-out in Sweden.”²⁰¹ Herein lies an excellent example of how the various classes of operatives can be seen within the work of just a few agents. Furthermore, it serves as an excellent illustration of how the functioning of the archive and repertoire intersect with intelligence and counter-intelligence work.

The decision by Philby to approach Menzies via Cowgill, is a decision based on intel, which is an engagement of the archive. The archival knowledge at the center of this event is in direct relation to the repertoire of clandestine-oriented travel that Admiral Canaris will be undertaking in his performance as the head of the Abwehr. The role that Philby assumes is

²⁰¹ Knightly, *The Master Spy*, 106.

within the vein of operator since he is coordinating tasks and choices based on archival information. Yet, through his actions he also performs the role of collector, in accumulating information to add to the archive, and analyst, in his assessment of the intelligence to inform his choices as an operator. Philby's superior Cowgill, in a similar manner engages with multiple roles—collector, analyst, operator, manager—as does Menzies—collector, analyst, manager, and potentially, policy maker. Each of these individuals performs a role that impacts the archive. The orders executed by Menzies to forbid the assassination of Canaris alters the performance of both Philby and Cowgill (and any operatives working under them). In effect, what transpires is that the repertoire of action affects the archive and results in a changed future performance. How does this transpire? Let us no longer ignore that Philby was a double agent.

Having been tasked with infiltrating the British intelligence service since shortly after his recruitment by the Soviet Union, the moment that Philby was accepted to a position in the British SIS was the moment he began his slow, deep penetration of the intelligence services. His acceptance to the counterintelligence branch in Spain during WWII was merely one step in this process. The unique aspect of this situation was that the shared goals of stymieing German encroachment, by both the British and Soviet Union, in effect offered Philby a first-rate opportunity to not only prove his worth to the British, but also serve as the perfect cover for his work for the Soviet Union. The case of Admiral Canaris demonstrates this particularly well. As Knightley

explains, “Menzie’s revelation that he was protecting Admiral Canaris, and the discovery that he was in touch with him via neutral Sweden came as a shock to Philby. What could be the reason for such a contact? Philby decided that Canaris must be in touch with anti-Hitler elements in Germany and that Menzie’s wanted to keep a line open to them. Philby told his Russian control and was instructed to remain alert for any developments in this area.”²⁰² What is described in this passage should be considered from at least two perspectives. Firstly, the actions of everyone involved in choosing not to assassinate Canaris affects the future archive and, in turn, the repertoire of Canaris’ actions altering his performance. As has been noted both in Knightley’s writing and by other historians, Canaris led a strong resistance effort from within the German military. An assassination by the Allies would not only eliminate Canaris, but render the repertoire of other members of the resistance movement in Germany moot, especially without the lead performer to guide them. However, and more importantly still, we see how these events provided Philby an opportunity to raid the archive for information to pass on to his superiors in the Soviet Union.

Espionage, unlike many other areas of work, provides a unique case-study to analyze instances where performance is not only defined by the archive and repertoire, but also relies on the access of other archives to inform the repertoire of the future, as well as relying on preventing access to the archive. As was noted in the first half of the Canaris-story, Philby in his

²⁰² Knightly, 107.

role as counter-intelligence is able to glimpse archival information held by the British due to the intervention preventing the assassination of Canaris. Philby inferred that Canaris was an important person for the SIS. Subsequently, Philby's continued performance as informed and successful counter-intelligence agent and operator allows him to confirm these suspicions directly with Menzies, which in turn he would pass on to the Soviet intelligence units. In effect Philby performs the role of loyal and effective SIS agent, informed by the associated—and deeply necessary for success—archive and repertoire of the performance of Operator. Simultaneously, Philby also engages with the similar process of tapping the tandem archive and repertoire through his performing of the role of imbedded agent of the Soviet Union. Two archives and two repertoires informing these two performances. Yet, in a third sense, Philby was also accessing the archive of the British SIS to transfer to the archive of the Soviet Union, which in turn affects that repertoire and thus performance initiatives of the NKVD and associated KGB. This is to say that infiltrating, accessing, and raiding the archive is a central aspect of the performance of an espionage agent, and especially of a mole.

When it comes to espionage, the challenging aspect of accessing and gleaning information from archives is that often these archives are secret and/or heavily protected. This is not only true when it comes to analogue archives that hold tangible materials, for instance reports printed on paper, but also embodied archives—the information that people possess internally, for instance the knowledge that Philby had of the town of Manzanara. The

Danish scholar Gunhild Borggreen writes on the ideas of secrets and confessions as they relate to archives and makes note that “secrecy is important to any society because it is closely linked to identity, and contributes to the formation and maintenance of human autonomy. Identity is linked to power, and power emerges from the ability to control flows of information—in this case an individual’s power to give or withhold information, and to control who are included or excluded from the secret.”²⁰³ While the case-study employed by Borggreen is concerned with personal and familial secrets, the same power dynamics apply to espionage. Philby’s power, and by extension the power of the Soviet Union, rests on Philby’s secrecy, which is directly related to his identity performance. Moreover, when we put this context of power and information control in dialogue with Diana Taylor’s archive and repertoire, we are presented with a dynamic instance of how the engagement of secret archives is at the root of espionage as performance, solidly establishing a link to the power structures that espionage is formulating, enabling, and sometimes, challenging. When we consider the case of Philby, who worked for both the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union, we see how in one sense his work as an agent is meant to challenge the power of Germany, as a part of the Allied efforts, while at the same time Britain is utilizing its secret archives to enact performances that will also

²⁰³ Gunhild Borggreen, “Achives of Secrecy: Yoshiko Shimada’s Art Project,” in *Performing Archives/Archives of Performance*, ed. Gunhild Borggreen and Rune Gade (Copenhagen, Denmark: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2013), 406.

challenge dominance by the Soviet Union in the post-war era. Indeed, Knightley identifies that part of the efforts underlying the collaboration between the German resistance operatives and the British government was to end the war to then “cope with the threat of communism.”²⁰⁴ The Soviet Union was all too aware of the issues that would be posed if the British and Germans reached a truce. Their use of agents such as Philby were a performative undertaking to challenge the powers of the British and associated allies.

The idea of secret archives is, in some ways, a paradoxical and confounding idea that runs against our normalized conceptualization of archives as being public and accessible, albeit confusing and hard to navigate at times. But clearly this is not the case, as was explained at the beginning of the chapter. Secrecy is merely one instance, in addition to many others, of built-in gate-keeping in these repositories—much like private archives of academic institutions, religious groups, and corporations, or historical issues around literacy, class or any other number of factors—that have been used to prevent individuals from accessing information, and in turn maintaining power structures. What we can understand from the secrecy of archives is that it contextualizes clandestine efforts, and that secrecy itself is a performative event. As Sissela Bok explains, secrets are “kept intentionally hidden, set apart in the mind of its keeper as requiring concealment.”²⁰⁵ This would

²⁰⁴ Knightley, *The Master Spy*, 106.

²⁰⁵ Bok, *Secrets*, 5.

include the individual who initially determines that a secret must be enacted, and any individual who is given access to that secret. In considering Bok's definition alongside Richard Schechner's terms of performance, we can infer that at times the act of secrecy is imbued with ritualistic notions of performance via their transformational qualities. Making something secret transforms that which is open and not hidden to something closed off. It also exists within the "showing-doing"²⁰⁶ framework established by Schechner, in that secrets by their very nature are meant to transform individuals into those who do and those who do not know information, while also displaying an aura of concealment and/or protection. A final parameter established by Schechner that secrecy falls within is its fulfilling of twice-behaved behavior²⁰⁷—the act of sharing a secret with someone, who in turn must keep that secret, and replicates its own terms of existence by perpetuating control. Secrecy as performative event also aligns with other scholarship on performance as well.

In respect to the position put forward by Diana Taylor, we might even extend the performative idea of secrecy further to suggest that secrecy is a part of a repertoire with no accessible archive, or is a repertoire that is intent on accessing the closed-off archive. While agents like Philby are not the focus of Borggreen's earlier cited analysis, they are concerned with the realities of identity as they pertain to infiltrating spaces and places in a subversive

²⁰⁶ Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 28.

²⁰⁷ Schechner, 28.

manner. Their repertoire informing the performance is driven by the very idea of accessing the archive from which they are locked-out. For example, Philby performs the role of 'loyal British agent' to access the archive of the British SIS and their work to establish ties with the German resistance movement. What is also suggested when we understand that the idea of secrecy is both performative and tied to identity and power, alongside an understanding that the repertoire can exist to access the archive, is that the very nature of accessing the archive can be the undoing of the performance. An agent being 'outed' is the moment when they lose control of the performance event. The risk that is undertaken by an operative like Philby is that the British might access the secret archive of the Soviet Union—the one that Philby contributes intel to—and learn that the performance undertaken by Philby is theatrical in nature, theatrical in the sense that is rooted in artifice. In essence, the secret archives at the core of espionage-as-performance are key to withholding information and govern the success of the performance. To access the archive might in fact result in the undoing of the performance. The power that Philby exercises in dabbling with modes of secrecy is not only control over sensitive information, but also control over the narrative and his own performance, while simultaneously risking the successful performance.

In other regards, the act of secrecy is reliant upon the hindrance of the archive informing the repertoire. This is well evidenced by the fact that Philby, upon informing the Soviet Union about the ongoing dialogue between Menzies and Canaris, was "urged not just to note any such moves but,

wherever possible, to work actively to frustrate them.”²⁰⁸ What is suggested here is that espionage is not only concerned with accessing the archive, but it is also interested in corrupting it when necessary. As Knightley notes, “Philby did not disappoint the Russians.”²⁰⁹ The example Knightley provides is an instance where Philby actively intervenes in the production of archival content. In late 1942, a report was produced by SIS analysts who put forward the case for an armistice with Germany. By many accounts the paper was well-received. However, because the individual who would be negotiating such an agreement required neutral ground to conduct their discussions with the Germans, the paper was shown to Philby because he had jurisdiction over intelligence efforts in neutral Spain and Portugal. “To everyone’s surprise, Philby resolutely blocked the paper, arguing that it was ‘speculative’.”²¹⁰ Outwardly, Philby’s performance was one that identified the risk of collaborating with the Germans as being too great for the war-effort. Yet, secretly, Philby’s rationale, as Knightley identifies, was that “[t]he German anti-nazis did not want to stop the war against Russia. They wanted to eliminate Hitler, make peace with the Allies, and then complete the invasion of the Soviet Union in which they stood on the brink of success. Philby could not run the risk that this might prove attractive to some elements

²⁰⁸ Knightley, *The Master Spy*, 107.

²⁰⁹ Knightley, 107.

²¹⁰ Knightley, 108.

in Britain so he used his power to deal with it.”²¹¹ The power being employed here are the powers of espionage, secrecy, and archival manipulation, all tied to performance. In this instance Philby uses his performance as British SIS agent—informed by a repertoire and archive—to block the enactment of the repertoire in relation to archival documents i.e. the report condoning an armistice. Following this logic, Philby’s performance is based on a repertoire of intervention.

The corruption of the archive is hardly the only dynamic at play within espionage. The archive can also be repurposed to trigger a repertoire and performance that is ill-informed. The most infamous example of this might be Operation Mincemeat from the Second World War. In this military undertaking, documents were planted on a deceased man and then left in Axis sympathetic territory (Spain) to be found. The goal of this effort was to convince the Abwehr that the Allied Forces intended to invade Greece and Sardinia and that their preparations for invading Sicily were being used to distract from their ‘real intentions’. In reality, the Allied Forces fully intended on invading Sicily, which they would then use as a stepping stone towards invading the remainder of Italy. The Operation Mincemeat documents were a ruse meant to misdirect the Axis Forces—a sort of double bluff or, in theatre terms, a play-within-a-play. In one sense, the performance that is taking place is a performance of archive materials. Similar to the theatrical performance of loyalty to the British that Philby puts on, the documents that were left with the

²¹¹ Knightley, 108.

body were governed by artifice. So too was the creation of the alternate persona for the homeless man's body that they were using—Major William Martin. The precision of selecting an individual who appeared as though they died at sea, the tailoring of his uniform, the inspection of the already decomposing body, and the arrangement of the documents were all done to “ensure that it was suitably outfitted to achieve its secret goal.”²¹² What is evident through an analysis of Operation Mincemeat is that a manipulated archive results in an entirely different performance from what a non-manipulated archive would produce. In this instance, the repertoire engaged by the Germans was very different from what would have occurred if this act of deception had not taken place. Moreover, the theatrical endeavor of manipulating the archive is an entirely different performance that takes place within the larger performance of espionage that is ongoing between the Allies and the Axis. A small performative episode in the larger theatre of war.

The implementation of Operation Mincemeat also serves to remind us that espionage is inherently associated with acts of misdirection along with deception. The case-study also shows us that the archive is not always representative of ‘Truth’. As Randolph Starn notes, “we tend to use archives without thinking much about them as institutions and, at the end of the day, remain committed to archives as a source of historical truth, despite having

²¹² Denis Smyth, *Deathly Deception: The Real Story of Operation Mincemeat* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010), 3.

good reason to know that their truth-value is questionable.”²¹³ In addition to Starn’s suggestion, it could be suggested that not only do we not think about archives as institutions, but also as extensions of other institutions i.e. the archives of the intelligence organizations. This could be further extended to a performance paradigm. For example, in documentary theatre such as Anna Deavere Smith’s *Notes from the Field*, we are presented with instances of verbatim performance that cannot be confirmed as verbatim entirely—what is said onstage is directly from the archive, but it is a challenge to verify that what is in the archive was actually said.

Noting that archives are not pure nor perfect accounts of past events, Starn’s position is an echo of Taylor’s skeptical observation of archives as *supposedly* enduring materials. He cites that archives are subject to what the “record-keepers choose to admit, archives are partial in all senses of the word. They are subject to dismemberment, damage, and destruction; in some times and places, archival fraud has been a kind of tradition.”²¹⁴ What then does this mean for performance? If we take what Taylor says to be true—that performance is governed by the interaction of the archive and the repertoire—then surely an archive that is partially, or even fully, altered in a deliberate manner would result in an altered performance. If we cannot assume that archives are ‘Truthful’ all the time, then we must conclude that neither are

²¹³ Randolph Starn, “Truths in the Archives.” *Common Knowledge* 8, No. 2 (2002), 388.

²¹⁴ Starn, 388.

performances. Any employment of an archive that is possibly altered, corrupted, or deceptive within the execution of performance would in turn suggest that the performance would be affected similarly.

Yet, what both the work of Philby and Operation Mincemeat show is that there is also a possibility of small Truths within larger events that are not Truthful. Philby's untruthful work for the SIS, which was supporting the Soviet Union and undermining the British efforts against Stalin, also are Truthful in the shared endeavor of resisting the goals of Hitler. Operation Mincemeat capitalizes on the Truth that an invasion by the allies will take place, just not on the island that is suggested through their act of misdirection. The reality is that an understanding of truth is subjective to the view or position taken when giving it consideration. Moreover, these case-studies show that Truth can be wielded in efforts to misdirect and deceive. Each of the instances cited in this paragraph are moments of truth that are turned against their targets—Philby is indeed a spy, just not always for the British, and the Allied Forces will invade continental Europe through the Mediterranean, but not through Greece.

What then does this mean for how we conceptualize espionage as theatre and performance? One of the most significant consequences that scholars might face when we understand that the archive can be misdirected, corrupted, or manipulated is that it is a challenge to decipher which materials within the archive are accurate and which are not. This is particularly true because when espionage is successful in its entirety it is seldom

acknowledged—a point that will be revisited in the next chapter. If we cannot confirm or deny that what is in the archive is absolutely true, we can then only assume that there might be an element of truth to be found. Furthermore, these issues around archives being raided, altered, and manipulated suggests that we cannot guarantee that a performance is entirely true. This can easily be seen with the work of Philby. There is truth in the fact that Kim Philby was an agent for the British SIS, but his performance as an agent was one of deception that relied on, and had the goal of, accessing and manipulating an archive that would enable falsity and provide a cover for his work as a Soviet Agent. Added to this is the fact that his actions of raiding and altering the archive resulted in misinformed performances by other's in the intelligence services. What is meant by this is that the archive that informed the repertoire of the Operators, Collectors, Analysts, Managers, and Policy Makers working with Philby was corrupted, and therefore their intended performances would be corrupted. Furthermore, with a lack of awareness towards what was happening to the archive informing their repertoire, their performances become complicit in the non-truth of Philby's performance, perhaps even untruthful in their own right. In short, the accessing, raiding, manipulation, and altering of the archives by individuals has serious consequences for the repertoire and thus performances of others. It is a ripple effect. And this issue around falsity and truth and accessing the archive is not only limited to the analogue world of espionage. It makes a serious impact in contemporary digital society as well.

Hidden Sites of Performance

Up until this point the chapter has focused exclusively on an analysis of espionage as it concerns the analog world. But intelligence operations continue to thrive in the postmodern age, especially through digital platforms and networks. Consequently, more care must be given to how espionage has morphed from entering locked rooms and throwing grenades, to accessing servers and launching cyberattacks. The central case study of this second half will focus on current concerns surrounding the company Huawei, and how espionage undertaken by digitally-oriented companies share techniques with the analogue world. To draw such comparisons, I will routinely refer to Kim Philby's work as an agent while exploring case-studies of Huawei and other companies. Of particular importance in this section is the topic of camouflaged archives and repertoires—a subject that is very pronounced in the 21st century. Furthermore, the concerns raised about Huawei are a good indicator of how espionage and its fears are playing out at this very moment. To respond to these issues the chapter will begin with an exploration of the idea of digital espionage along with its theatrical and performative qualities.

To begin analyzing contemporary espionage we should again look back to how intelligence work has been conceptualized historically. In *Spy and Counter-Spy* Richard Wilmer Rowan explains to his reader that espionage has a well-documented history and that modern espionage is, in a sense, unchanged. "We are accustomed to such progressive improvements in modern conflict that the winning innovations of one great battle are

discarded as defective and obsolete by the next. Yet never, with all the changes in the art of making war, has the spy been substantially improved or altered.”²¹⁵ Written in 1928 this position often went unchallenged by scholars for many years, but perspective has shifted recently. The digital age has brought about new techniques and hurdles that espionage practices must overcome, and can also employ. Rowan’s position also shows that the archive of espionage remains a site of contestation, even in scholarly circles. The digital age only complicates this further.

The advent of the internet has presented new mechanisms for the facilitation of espionage work. It might even be suggested that the tools of the trade have so substantially evolved that espionage itself has changed. These changes are alluded to by former NSA employee Joel Brenner in *America The Vulnerable: Inside the New Matrix of Digital Espionage* who writes that “in the last ten years [espionage] has changed in fundamental ways. First, it is no longer a game played only with human spies and electronic bugs in government offices [...] If you steal terabytes of sensitive information electronically, from the comfort of a computer terminal thousands of miles away, perhaps you don’t need a spy. The second recent change [...] is the target set into the private sector, particularly in companies that are not

²¹⁵ Richard Wilmer Rowan, *Spy and Counter-Spy: The Development of Modern Espionage* (New York, USA: The Viking Press, 1928), 5.

working for the Defense Department of the ministerial equivalents.”²¹⁶ These new methods identified by Brenner demand new considerations of espionage practice, and theatre and performance offers useful insight. This is especially true with thinking through the *raison d’être* behind the ability of these practices to remain undetected. If espionage itself has changed and moved away from being exclusively oriented around government work and now includes private industry, then by extension the archive and repertoire of espionage will have evolved as well. This point will be revisited later when working through the central case-study of Huawei.

The thesis of this research project is that the work of a spy is one of performance and is imbued with theatricality. While in previous instances it has been suggested that espionage is a form of acting, one could argue that newer forms of clandestine work are in line with what theatre and performance scholar Laura Levin refers to as ‘embeddedness’ or the act of blending oneself into the surrounding space.²¹⁷ This conceptualization challenges the theatrical and performative qualities that we are often used in analysis, that there is a demonstrative event taking place that is either depictive, such as an actor, or transformative/transportative, in the Schechner sense of performance—both iterations typically being public or broadly

²¹⁶ Joel Brenner. *America the Vulnerable: Inside the New Threat Matrix of Digital Espionage, Crime, and Warfare* (New York, USA: Penguin Press, 2011), 52.

²¹⁷ Laura Levin, *Performing Ground*, 135.

recognized as 'real' or physically transpiring. This idea of physicality is key. In support of Levin's position, digital espionage fulfills the criteria of embeddedness and in many regards utilizes camouflage as a performative strategy to remain hidden—a performance that remains unseen. The lack of the same tangible physical qualities that we usually attribute to espionage practice allows digital espionage to happen almost instantaneously, as well as to be delocalized, nebulous, and unseen.

This perspective of espionage as camouflaged, dislocated, and immediate is indeed suggested by scholars who work in the field of intelligence studies. With the advent of the digital age and its associated form of espionage there is not necessarily a need for an embodied presence in the work of an agent. As Jonathan Lord explains, “[i]n a digital world [...] cover identities and tradecraft manufactured for an analog environment can quickly become ineffective and potentially dangerous to those who continue to use them.”²¹⁸ Our traditional operators and collectors have their distinct roles collapsed and now conduct their work at a distance and infiltrate servers, networks, repositories, and virtual spaces, all through digital techniques. As Brenner explains it: “your spy’s job is no longer stealing information but planting malicious software from the inside to enable a remote cyberthief to snatch information later [...] Your ideal mole may no longer be the ministers

²¹⁸ Jonathan Lord “Undercover Under Threat: Cover Identity, Clandestine Activity, and Covert Action in the Digital Age.” *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 28 No. 4 (2015), 666.

private secretary but rather the ministry's chief technical officer."²¹⁹ Part of the challenge of preventing espionage is the context of the digital world, which demands that information be easily located and accessed. This proves to be a significant vulnerability for those attempting to protect the archive of information from a Philby-like access and raid. The ease of access in which society trades in information provides opportunity for multiple points of infiltration, with the acts occurring within a large range of locales, sites and platforms. Changes to entering materials into the archive invariably shifts the way that espionage is performed.

In a sense, past analogue espionage could be considered more in line with what we might identify as site specific work—there was a particular space that the espionage performance took place in to infiltrate and obtained information from the archive held in this place. Drawing on theories proposed by Bernard Tschumi, practitioner and scholar Mike Pearson suggests that site-specific performance, defined partly by its relationship between action and space, can reciprocate, be indifferent towards, or in conflict with space. And that it can also be any combination of these three.²²⁰ The historical understanding of espionage would suggest that a successful performance of analogue espionage is reciprocal with the site in which the espionage is taking place. For example, in Philby's efforts to infiltrate the British SIS his

²¹⁹ Brenner, *American the Vulnerable*, 52.

²²⁰ Mike Pearson, *Site-Specific Performance* (Houndsmill, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 38-40.

performance needed to have a reciprocal relationship with the sites specific to the Intelligence agencies of the United Kingdom so that he would remain undetected. However, Philby's repertoire of action was also indifferent the sites of the British SIS, which draws another link to the site-specific nature of espionage. Furthermore, Philby's infiltration of the archive is in direct conflict with its status as a locked and protected space—a third connection with Pearson's site-specific ideas. What this suggests is that espionage is a sort of site-specific performance that is not exclusively reciprocal, indifferent or in conflict, but in fact can be all three. This is the same for digital espionage. While people no longer need to be present in a physical location, the performance has instead transferred to a digital site and accessed it through a disembodied performance taking place in a digital space.

The Blurring of Corporations and Governments

Unlike the war-time exploits of Philby, the realities of contemporary espionage between private enterprises treats the archive as a for-profit repository that can be raided. As addressed earlier, one of the current and most salient examples of this issue is that of Chinese technology company Huawei. As has been reported repeatedly throughout recent years; “[at] the moment the member nations of the Five Eyes, an international alliance between the United States, Canada, The United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand, are conducting reviews on the vulnerability of their 5G communications systems, with most having barred the company Huawei from

participating in the construction of this infrastructure.”²²¹ The underlying fear that initiated this strategic review is that the Chinese government has written into law a requirement that independent companies may be forced to provide data to Beijing when requested and, more specifically, forced to participate in the acts of espionage and surveillance. While not exclusively corporate espionage, it is an excellent indicator of the sort of espionage that can and is undertaken by corporations. Added to this is the routine accusations that Huawei has endured throughout the years accusing it of stealing the intellectual property from other corporations. While robust scholarship investigating these accusations is lacking (partly due to the real-time developments of the issues surrounding Huawei) what is suggested here is a blurring of the distinction between corporations and governments—a point that will be covered momentarily.

With respect to the concerns of the Five Eyes, the alleged fear is that Huawei’s technology will masquerade as infrastructure while in fact operating as a surrogate of the Chinese government intelligence organizations, helping them facilitate the transmission of state-secrets and civilian information from western nations. The spyware would effectively be an invisible performance hidden in plain sight. As Laura Levin might identify it, the invisible quality not only constitutes a form of camouflage but is the very essence of her notion of

²²¹ “Cyberspy Agency Says Networks Are Protected as U.S. Issues Huawei Warning,” CBC/Radio Canada, February 22, 2019, www.cbc.ca/news/politics/huawei-pompeo-canada-reaction-1.5028294.

embeddedness—where this performative act is seen as a participant being able to “strategically position themselves *inside* a particular environment or group.”²²² If we consider this from the perspective of the Five Eyes Alliance, Huawei’s technology positions itself as infrastructure in a nation. In thinking through Levin’s suggestion of camouflage as embedded performance, when we consider digital espionage in this sense and as a performance practice, we see a form of disembodied performance within the digital realm. This is a form of performance that is based on algorithms and programming, that is manufactured, and one which will perform in whatever role it is ‘cast’ into during its creation. This further serves the theory that digital espionage, unlike analogue espionage, is definable as a high speed, insidious, delocalized iteration of spy-work. Placed in dialogue with an understanding of the archive as it relates to espionage, the repertoire serves to further entrench the secrecy of established espionage work as a form of state-sponsored intelligence, much in the way it was identified in the first chapter but now in a digital capacity.

What this suggests is that an intriguing performance is taking place. One in which the Huawei technology acts as infrastructure that is meant to transmit information while really existing for the collection of information—a sort of collapse in the distinction between Andregg’s Operator and Collector where that which is ‘doing things’ is also collecting intel. In a sense, it would be similar to a highway that is built to let cars drive down the road, but

²²² Levin, *Performing Ground*, 137.

sometimes reroutes cars so they can be sold off, raided for parts, or repurposed. Legitimizing the theory that Huawei's technology is engaged in a dual performance is Naomi Stead's view on the performance of objects in her article "Performing Objecthood; Museums, Architecture and the play of Artefactuality". Stead writes that objects have "always had an audience, but it has most often been an audience unconscious of the performance."²²³ We can extend this further with digital espionage in that the technological platforms provided by Huawei act in a manner beyond what is most obvious i.e. not only are they an information transit way as they are viewed by their public audience, but also a collection point for the archive as viewed by those facilitating the espionage. It is most assuredly an instance where an ulterior performance of deception and misdirection, but also infiltration and intelligence gathering could be taking place.

Of further interest is that this is unlike the traditional concept of an operative identified in the earlier part of the chapter, where their ability to blend in renders them relatively inert to the day-to-day aspects of society. With Huawei, the digital operative and their networks serve to *benefit* day-to-day society, in this case as digital infrastructure. We might even view it as an inversion of the role of a mole. More interesting still is that this position would indicate that the facilitation of espionage is not very different from the very structures put in place by society to enhance its functioning. This issue is

²²³ Naomi Stead, "Performing Objecthood; Museums, Architecture and the Play of Artefactuality," *Performance Research* 12, No. 4 (2008), 45.

alluded to by Mayer-Schönberg and Cukier in their publication *Big Data: A Revolution That Will Transform How We Live, Work, and Think* where they note that many technology companies, such as Google, Facebook or LinkedIn serve not only their advertised intention, but also to collect data for *their* archive. The line is so blurred between the mandate of a digital company, and the process of collecting information from users, that they are one in the same.

This is especially true when structures of communication are prearranged and/or programmed to facilitate espionage. In a recently released journal article entitled “The Huawei Affair and China's Technology Ambitions” Nigel Inkster addresses the ongoing Huawei dispute as it relates to national security concerns in the United States. Inkster writes that “[t]he US in particular has long had reservations about companies such as Huawei, based on twin beliefs: that much of the company's initial success came from the theft of US technology that was then used to undercut US companies, and that Huawei equipment might contain so-called back doors that could be used for espionage or sabotage.”²²⁴ Inkster is not alone in his perspective. George Patterson Mannon III explains that “this focus on information dominance is [...] a specifically anti-American strategy, proceeding from the PLA leadership's assessment that the Chinese military cannot defeat the U.S. military in a conventional scenario, given the United States' technological

²²⁴ Nigel Inkster “The Huawei Affair and China's Technology Ambitions” *Survival* 61, No. 1 (2019) 108-109.

advantages and extensive experience in prosecuting such conflicts.”²²⁵ The argument put forward by ‘The Five Eyes’ is that Huawei’s technology, which would be critical to 5G infrastructure, would be a form of this dual spy/facilitation. What both Inkster and Mannon’s positions suggest is that in the capital-driven system of globalization, government espionage efforts have been appropriated by, and in some instance outright given to, companies to utilize in both their corporate espionage and also in their efforts to help respective governments beef up their archive for a future performance of military intervention. There might be no greater example of this than the revelations made concerning Wikileaks, which revealed the systemic domestic espionage being conducted against the United States public in an alleged effort to counter domestic-terrorism.

The strange reality of digital espionage as a performance is that there is a blurring between the dualities of the truthful and untruthful. It is reminiscent of the situation in which Philby was a spy both for and against the British. As a parallel, Huawei’s infrastructure contributions would arguably help enhance society, while also allegedly posing a risk to national security. In considering this perspective we must also look at the motivations for opposing Huawei’s contributions to national infrastructure projects. In a world with protectionist-America leading security decisions, and understanding that

²²⁵ George Patterson Mannon, “Cyberwar: The United States and China Prepare for the Next Generation of Conflict,” *Comparative Strategy* 30, No. 2 (2011), 127.

corporations are at times aided by governments in their attempts to obtain corporate intelligence and information from competitors, it could be reasoned that, in fact, Huawei's technology poses a greater threat to corporate America than the government or populace. Or is there even a distinction between the two? Indeed, Inkster raises this exact issue in his article explaining that "[t]he US now sees China's designs on becoming a peer competitor in advanced technologies as an existential threat to a presumption of American dominance in all aspects of technology."²²⁶ The word "all" almost assuredly includes economic dominance. It is yet another iteration of Derrida's assertion that control of the archive is the paragon of institutional domination. Following this, the performance of digital espionage, one that has developed out a blurring of both corporate and government practices, is the reinforcement of institutional domination. Moreover, like with Philby there are a series of performances taking place layered on top of each other. These include the performance of infrastructure as both technological highway and collection point for the archive, the performance of corporations serving as both purveyors of technological infrastructure and as extensions of the government, and the performance of the governments concerned with espionage conducted against their citizens, while in fact raiding the personal archives of the citizenry.

The anxiety that arises from the threat of espionage by Huawei is substantial, and the concerns are deemed so important by members of the

²²⁶ Inkster, "The Huawei Affair," 109.

United States government that there has been an ultimatum hinted at, which strongly urges allies of the United States to bar Huawei from building technological infrastructure or risk being deemed untrustworthy to share intelligence with. As one official explained in respect to the potentially compromising quality of the technology, “if a country adopts this [technology] and puts it in some of their critical information systems, we won’t be able to share information with them, we won’t be able to work alongside them.”²²⁷ What should now be considered is whether it is the western governments performing ‘national security concerns’ on behalf of domestic corporations, or if it is Huawei and its interest in business enterprise performing as a vessel of the Chinese government? As noted, these multiple motivations only raise the stakes further still and add to the dubiousness of the motivations for these performances. Perhaps though, like Philby, there is no one answer and both scenarios are true. That digital infrastructure enables espionage irrespective of who is selling it, and both China and Western nations are eager to control these technological thoroughfares to accumulate information for their respective archives and economic advancement. To address this issue, we must understand the motivations for controlling information infrastructure and networks.

²²⁷ “Cyberspy Agency Says Networks Are Protected”

Big Data Requires Supersized Performances

Every time we ‘Google’ a phrase, watch a film on YouTube, or make a purchase with a credit card we produce information ready to be stored by the respective company offering us the platform to follow through with such actions. In each instance, small bits of data are carted away to a repository, most likely a server, to provide nuanced perspective for the companies about the use of their platform by members of society. We would like to think it would stop there, but it does not. This data is also used to profile individuals and can be sold, shared and, at points, even stolen. While small impulse purchases on a Visa card by many people may not seem like significant performative engagements, the archival information produced out of these events and accumulated by companies has come to be known as ‘Big Data’, and it is very valuable. Brenner addresses this very idea at the beginning of his publication: “Data is a commodity, and the market for it is measured in billions of dollars—trillions if we include electronic banking and credit card issuers.”²²⁸ This value is certainly a motivating factor for both companies and respective governments. To obtain data for resale profit and to gain financially by facilitating the flow of information is a lucrative endeavor. To lose control of the flow of data, which we might call the making of the archive, is to lose financially.

²²⁸ Brenner, *American The Vulnerable*, 1.

Data is not the only profit-generating aspect of these day-to-day performances that individuals engage with. As Joseph W. Jerome explains, "Today, privacy has become a commodity that can be bought and sold. While many would view privacy as a constitutional right or even a fundamental human right, our age of big data has reduced privacy to a dollar figure."²²⁹ This, we might conclude, is yet another motivating factor in the desire to control digital infrastructure. Jerome continues:

'Monetizing privacy' has become something of a holy grail in today's data economy. We have seen efforts to establish social networks where users join for a fee and the rise of reputation vendors that protect users' privacy online, but these services are luxuries. And when it comes to our privacy, price sensitivity often dictates individual privacy choices. Because the "price" an individual assigns to protect a piece of information is very different from the price she assigns to sell that same piece of information, individuals may have a difficult time protecting their privacy." Privacy clearly has financial value, but in the end there are fewer people in a position to pay to secure their privacy than there are individuals willing to sell it for anything it's worth.²³⁰

Not only is big data sold to organizations, but the protection of such data has become a lucrative industry in and of itself. It is a commodification of counter-espionage. Here again we see institutional control of the archive. However, we have moved beyond governmental or societal control and find the battle for dominance of controlling the archive emerging between corporations.

²²⁹ Joseph W. Jerome, "Buying and Selling Privacy: Big Data's Difference Burdens and Benefits." *Stanford Law Review Online* 66 (2013-2014) 48.

²³⁰ Jerome, 48.

With this perspective, and looking back to the case-study of Huawei, it could be concluded that western companies are more concerned about their loss of controlling the archive and have spurred on the government to protect their interests under the guise of national security. This perspective is parsed out by Kaska, Beckvard, and Minárik in their article “Huawei, 5G and China as a Security Threat” where they write that “[t]he current US China trade dispute is something that cannot be overlooked. Yet it should not be overplayed as the sole driving reason. The restriction of Huawei technology has a long history and did not begin with the current US administration. [...] To the contrary – many countries are eager to launch 5G networks due to the expected quality and innovative services, and a decision to rely on competitors would at the current stage certainly delay deployment.”²³¹ In other words, while the United States and its allies purport that the Chinese company embodies a risk to national security this might not actually be the case. As Joseph Campbell, a former assistant director of criminal investigations at the FBI explains, “we don't know as private citizens all the intelligence information the US and its allies have gathered relative to China and Huawei... but... there's no doubt China is a significant threat for the United States, they are committed to becoming a lead economic and military

²³¹ Kadri Kaska, Henrik Beckvard and Tomáš Minárik “Huawei, 5G and China as a Security Threat.” *Belt and Road Initiative* (Talin, Estonia: NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence, 2018) 18.

power in the world.”²³² Intriguingly this situation depicts an instance where the distinctions between corporate and government espionage are again blurred. With the advent of the digital age it could be reasoned that espionage has mutated so much that different forms are now indistinguishable from each other. Archives informing repertoires have merged.

With the integration of different archives into a singular iteration of espionage we are looking beyond siloed forms of power and control to the threat of one singular institutional power. If we agree with Derrida’s position that the control of the archive is to maintain institutional dominance, then we might extend this to suggest that control of Data is similarly equated to power. Following the same logic as infrastructure objects engaging in a double performance of infrastructure/espionage-tool, the desires of corporate America perform as national security concerns for the United States and by extension the Western world. Unlike many other societal issues, when it comes to ‘Big Data’ the government may feel the need to step in even if only to protect domestic industry from foreign encroachment. Big data is an archive that is constantly put to use and required to perform. Financial success is dependent on controlling and limiting access to the archive, much like how the British controlled and limited access to their archives in the case of Philby. So just how does data come in to the equation of digital espionage?

²³² Shona Gosh, "Here's Why The US Is Terrified Of One Chinese Company Controlling The World's 5G Networks" *Business Insider*, May 16, 2019. <https://www.businessinsider.com/why-us-terrified-huawei-5g-networks-china-dominance-2019-2>.

Espionage for Capital Gain: Corporations and the Public

The relationship between the United States and China is, at the best of times, tense. Their geographic size, large economies, and importance in the political sphere could position them as the great facilitators of technological progress. As Yuxiao and Lu explain in the edited volume *China and Cybersecurity: Espionage, Strategy, and Politics in the Digital Domain*, “due to lack of mutual trust and the inconsistency of network regulation mechanisms, thus far China and the United States have not had effective communication or cooperation with respect to cybersecurity issues.”²³³ The lack of cooperation in cybersecurity is only one concern. “China and the United States suspect each other of committing major cyberattacks against their domestic networks.”²³⁴ As the authors point out, these attacks could in fact be the work of other entities, such as non-aligned political entities and capitalist enterprises. Indeed, corporations acting outside their jurisdiction against governments is not new or surprising. In fact, in recent years we have seen corporations harnessing the archive to interfere not only in the affairs of other corporations, but also the internal affairs of nations and the populace.

If the votes and subsequent fallout from the 2016 United States presidential election or the 2016 Brexit referendum are any indication, digital

²³³ Li Yuxiao and Xu Lu. “China’s Cybersecurity Situation and the Potential for International Cooperation,” in *China and Cybersecurity* ed. Jon R. Lindsey, Tai Ming Cheung, and Derek S. Reveron (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2015) 234.

²³⁴ Yuxiao and Lu, 234.

data and information—the archive—is a highly prized and ever increasing commodity pursued by national and multinational businesses, irrespective of the ethical breaches that may occur when in pursuit. As Jeffery Rosen suggests, “[on] the Internet, every Web site we visit, every store we browse in, every magazine we skim, and the amount of time we spend skimming it, create electronic footprints that increasingly can be traced back to us, revealing detailed patterns about our tastes, preferences, and intimate thoughts.”²³⁵ This, as was suspected and recently confirmed in the earlier mentioned events, has been occurring without permission in a form of espionage undertaken by corporations against the populace. A form of information siphoning and collating that is often identified as dataveillance, what we might think of as a raiding of the archive. Unlike Philby, who raided the archive of the British SIS to enable military and intelligence service maneuvers of the Soviet Union, information from the contemporary archive is then shared, sold, or traded between entities in an effort to generate profit.

Yet, another central concern with dataveillance is that it is not only used for corporate profits but for other undertakings as well. As Sara Degli Esposti explains, “[d]ataveillance, a concept originally forged by Roger Clarke (1988), refers to the systematic monitoring of people or groups, by means of personal data systems, in order to regulate or govern their behavior.”²³⁶ This

²³⁵ Jeffrey Rosen, *The Unwanted Gaze: The Destruction of Privacy in America* (New York, USA: Random House, 2000), 7.

²³⁶ Sara Degli Esposti, “When Big Data Meets Dataveillance: The Hidden Side of Analytics,” *Surveillance & Society* 12, No. 2 (2014), 210.

governing of behavior adds yet another element into the equation of digital espionage. The performance of digital espionage enables a controlling of the everyday performances of the populace. It is again evocative of Derrida's assertion that the control of the archive is a wielding of institutional power and an example of how the performance of espionage evokes qualities of Althusser's Repressive State Apparatus and Ideological State Apparatuses. Instead of theatre as a formulation of an ISA, as is usually the case, it is functioning as a part of the RSA. Bearing this in mind, we might conclude that the fear from the American government and its western allies, in areas that concern data-siphoning/archive raiding, is less about a fear of losing profits but more-so a fear of losing control—to no longer dominate and coerce in the way that is desired.

The extent of this exploitation and manipulation is certainly cause for concern, but perhaps even more shocking is the extent to which this information is used to cajole, misdirect, and manipulate users and providers of such data in what Marcy Peek refers to as “web-lining” or “online steering.”²³⁷ Often at the basis of such puppeteering by corporations are identity markers, such as race, sex, and age, that are exploited and preyed upon in acts of discrimination undermining the once utopic view that the internet would be a domain of equality. As Peek explains, “‘steering’ refers to

²³⁷ Marcy Peek, “Passing Beyond Identity on the Internet: Espionage & Counterespionage in the Internet Age.” *Vermont Law Review* 28 (2003-2004), 92.

the practice of companies directing individuals to or away from marketing messages or offers based on predetermined identity characteristics; online steering refers to these discriminatory practices taking place online.”²³⁸ This ‘free-market’ technique has concerning characteristics that echo clandestine activity in warfare – specifically the use of archival information to manipulate the populace and sow division in a discriminatory way. The espionage now taking place is one that is exploitative, with corporations deceptively masquerading as providing a service whilst in fact leeching data from unsuspecting cliental to manipulate their behavior. It is also an instance where the performers have now taken on the roles of directors in the theatre production of espionage. This, along with the discriminatory practices at the heart of this exploitation, pushes this technique beyond dubious ethical practices into a practice of systemic oppression.

Likewise, online-steering through dataveillance can also be easily positioned within the realm of Althusser’s RSA/ISA bind. A reproducing cycle that is hard to break from, “devices proliferate as effective data gathering tools. They strongly contribute to data accumulation [...] Once data are created and organized into databases, they can be analyzed in search of patterns. The knowledge generated from data analysis informs the creation of policies and procedures, which quite often are intended to orientate people’s behavior.”²³⁹ As is clear, this performance and direction is a well-oiled

²³⁸ Peek, 92.

²³⁹ Degli Eposti, “When Big Data Meets Dataveillance,” 213.

machine facilitating control; “[t]he end of each cycle represents the beginning of a new cycle: after some recommendation is implemented, new information is collected, analysed and transformed into new recommendations.”²⁴⁰ Esposti illustrates this cycle for her reader (Figure 2).

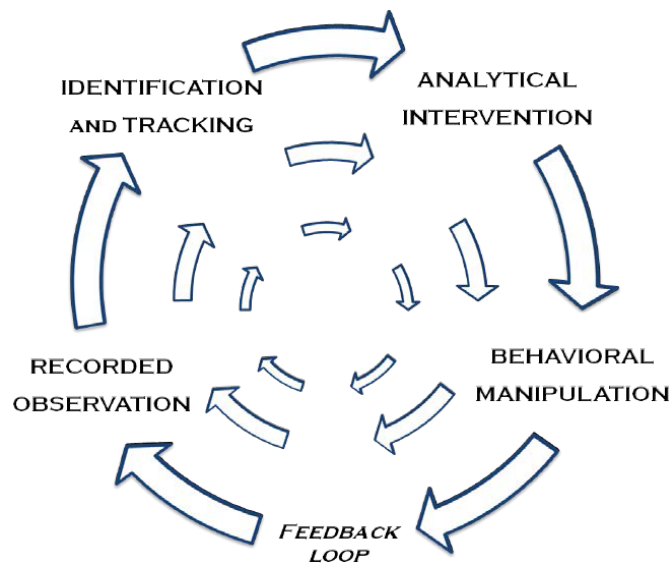


Figure 2. Relationship among the four categories of actions of dataveillance.²⁴¹

Intriguingly, and because of few controls being offered by the government and judicial system, Peek proposes a subversive response to this issue “that , where data marketing and steering activities by commercial entities engender the marginalization of certain groups of individuals, technological techniques

²⁴⁰ Degli Eposti, 213.

²⁴¹ Degli Eposti, 213.

of resistance and counterespionage-namely 'identity passing'-should be implemented by marginalized persons to counteract online profiling."²⁴² She explains further in the article that identity passing is harnessing the awareness of intersectional identities, something that the technologies analyzing our data are unable to compute. More specifically, "an online consumer can simply "pass" by "expressing" to the decision makers that she is, for example, whoever she wants the data collectors and profilers to think she is."²⁴³ What Peek proposes is a harnessing of theatrical technique along with a re-imagining of counter-intelligence practices, which effectively attempt to deceive the deceiver through a performance of intersectionality. As Peek herself puts it, it is "an example of wielding the "master's tools" in order to "dismantle the master's house."²⁴⁴

Instead of hiding identities and attempting to maneuver 'incognito', which we might equate to the embedded quality of camouflage as performance that Levin describes, Peek suggests that members of society exploit the lack of nuance of the technologies employed by the corporations to inform their way of engaging in the digital world. There is no pretense in what Peek proposes. She suggests that civilians employ a form of theatricality to throw technology and algorithms off their scent, to adapt and then adopt a

²⁴² Degli Eposti, 213.

²⁴³ Degli Eposti, 213.

²⁴⁴ Peek, "Passing Beyond Identity," 109.

new persona to employ. Peek predicts that this approach might be criticized by some groups due to a perceived embracing of identity markers as a sort of caricatured performance of identity. However, she argues that such a performance is not embracing such identity extremes but instead in line with the ideas of Antoni Gramsci subverting a capitalist domination and normalization of these Goffman-esque 'sign-vehicles'.

The Digital Direction

Peek proposes a disruption that occurs at the identification stage of the cycle as described by Esposti, a re-purposing of the camouflage that Levin identifies and in line with the understanding that group homogeneity can be tooled in such a manner as to avoid detection. An act that Levin identifies as the "art of blending in"²⁴⁵ when oriented around group dynamics and "situating the self"²⁴⁶ when concerned with individual consciousness. To subvert the espionage practices taking place we must appropriate the techniques of espionage and counter-perform. We might see this re-articulation of identities as another instance of performance that is similar to the avatars we see in online gaming, where players create personas that are not necessarily accurate depictions of their 'real-life' identities.

While this suggestion begs the question as to if we should consider these counter-espionage practices necessary skills for the digital age, it also

²⁴⁵ Levin, *Performing Ground*, 13.

²⁴⁶ Levin, 173.

demands that we question if such subversive techniques are in fact being employed and applied to the scenario of Huawei. Is there a possibility that this idea of counter-performance is already being used? This could in fact be what is occurring with the dialogue surrounding Huawei. What is happening is a dual performance of intention—establishing digital infrastructure—about a dual use of technology—helpful infrastructure as espionage tools. In this regard, the populous is being deceived by the performances of global players, whether governmental or corporate, giving these organization continued access to personal archives. As in the case of Philby, the multilayered performances obfuscate what the successes, failures, challenges, and ultimate goals of digital espionage are.

The Archive of Espionage

While Philby may be the master-deceiver of the 20th century, the digital age has brought about significant changes in the way society conceptualizes espionage and repositions the master-deceivers to those of corporations and their infrastructure. Theatre and performance offers us not only a way to frame these new instances of espionage practice, but techniques to undermine, challenge and subvert the dominating qualities that they employ and perpetuate. Furthermore, by employing an approach of subversion, especially through the performance of ‘fictional identities’, members of society embed their own avatars within the system to disrupt the flow of the dataveillance and domination cycle.

This chapter has been concerned with the realities of espionage work as it relates to the archive, and the influence and role that archives play in the execution of espionage work, or any other work related to espionage, such as research. By working through the accessibility of materials by researchers and agents, the role of the archive in spy work and spy-work in the archive, the accessing of the archive in the event of a security breach or for study, and the corruptibility of materials as they relate to acts of deception, the archive is proven to be central to both the efforts of espionage as a target and an integral part of contextualizing spy-work as a phenomenon. Moreover, in the digital era espionage has capitalized on the archive and exploited the control of 'data' to expand beyond government to government/corporate espionage work. The value of the archive has moved into a realm where the information contained within it is highly valued and sought after. The integral nature of the archive cannot be understated in an analysis of espionage-come-performance. Its influence is far-reaching and efficacious. It governs those who undertake espionage, those who are targets of intelligence work, and those who wish to explore clandestine practices. The archive feeds performance and remains as evidence of past performance events. It is used to misdirect and deceive, as well as enable and corrupt. The transformative power of the archive allows the defining characteristics of espionage to reach out from beyond the grave and affect other endeavors and people with the qualities of clandestine affairs, even when the instances of espionage are long past.

Chapter 4 – Espionage as Poetic Failure

“She was a creation from beginning to end, a character in a play that she continuously rescripted.”

- Pat Shipman, *Femme Fatale*

The State of Failure

It may shock historians to know that following her execution by a firing squad—indeed, directly after a ‘doctor had pronounced her lifeless’—Mata Hari ‘raised her hand to her forehead’. Well, perhaps not Mata Hari herself but the actor Marissa Mell who was cast as the infamous spy in the ill-fated 1960s musical *Mata Hari*. Mell’s raised hand was just one of the many bizarre mistakes and failures that, according to theatre critic Bill Henry, plagued the preview of the show that he attended. Failures that were so numerous that Henry asserted that “the whole thing began to look like something planned by Mack Sennett” of Keystone Cops fame.²⁴⁷ The failure was so anticipated that when it ran that night in Washington D.C. producer David Merrick warned the audience beforehand that the show was “just a rehearsal”²⁴⁸—and it was, but not in the sense that Merrick anticipated. This was never going to be a dry-run for an ultimately successful show on Broadway. It was a rehearsal for the

²⁴⁷ Bill Henry, “Window on Washington” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, USA) 29 Nov. 1967, A1.

²⁴⁸ Henry, A1.

future failures of the show that in the end could not escape the so-called 'Keystone Cops' aesthetic, as it was described by Henry in his deliciously descriptive critique. What transpired over the next year was one of the biggest flops in the history of Broadway musicals. Closed early due to disastrous reviews and results in Washington during the pre-Broadway tour, the show was revamped and given the new title of *Ballad for a Firing Squad*. Yet, as is noted by critics such as Henry and contemporary Sam Zolotow, even the revamped songs and title could not save *Mata Hari* from fated failure.

It seems that failure often requires a description to contextualize that which has failed. Yet more general definitions locate failure as a category of performance. In *Failure (The Art of Living)*, Colin Feltham, for example, writes that "[Failure] refers to some sort of breakdown, some malfunctioning or underperformance."²⁴⁹ And this description certainly accounts for what happened with *Mata Hari*. The scenery falling, the clothes coming undone, the 'dead' character coming back to life: these events were not meant to happen in the tightly controlled environment of the musical. Yet Henry's description, as an articulation of the points raised by Feltham, reveals an intriguing aspect about failure: that it requires context. It could be argued that the failure of *Mata Hari* was not the poor performers, set, or costumes, but the lack of control and discipline on the part of management or directing. It could also be suggested that there was a failure to properly set expectations for

²⁴⁹ Colin Feltham, *Failure (The Art of Living)*, (Milton, UK: Taylor and Francis. 2014), Kindle Edition, 17.

what was about to be watched at the National Theatre in Washington that evening. In another reality—where *Mata Hari* was meant to be a comedy—these events of ‘failure’ might have been intended. In such an instance it might be argued that these failures were in fact successes in their attempt to illustrate failure along the lines of Mack Sennett’s ‘Keystone Cops slapstick aesthetic’. Failure is at times hard to identify and even harder to define. And the world of theatre and performance is no stranger to this issue.

In theatre we speak about the failure of a show, an installation, or a piece of work. We make work about failure, and about the failure of making work about failure. Evocative of Marvin Carlson’s assertion of theatre productions being ghosted by the past, failure haunts theatre and performance both as lived reality and as subject matter.²⁵⁰ This can easily be extended to the production of *Mata Hari*. For what was that musical if not a failed theatrical production haunted by the case of failed espionage that was the real-life Mata Hari? Even more strange is that the failure that haunts a production or lived-reality seems to be able to transcend the performance event to affect people. It has been suggested that the demise of the career of Austrian actress Marissa Mell can, in part, be traced to the very noted and infamous failure of the musical *Mata Hari*. Cruelly coincidental is the fact that, like Mata Hari, Mell’s career began to seriously decline when she was no longer seen as the beautiful young woman that she used to be. Her last

²⁵⁰ Marvin Carlson, *The Haunted Stage: The Theatre as Memory Machine*, (Ann Arbor, USA: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 3.

productions strayed into the realm of soft-core pornography much in the way that Mata Hari resorted to prostitution and love-affairs to maintain her success, while her career as a dancer and performer collapsed and failed.

Yet failure not only haunts an undertaking but also governs it. How an individual rates or categorizes failure is equally based on their ability to identify and eschew the phenomenon. And this is as much about reality as it is about perception. Consider this next narrative: On the 25th of July, 1917, a woman arrived in Vincennes, France, on what was then the outskirts of Paris. She was dressed in stockings and a blouse, which accented a dark outfit lined with fur, “on her head a felt hat and her shoes were ankle boots.”²⁵¹ As she walked to the parade ground, thirteen men stood at a distance watching. Offered a blindfold, she declined; as she did when it was suggested that she be tied to the stake now between her and the wall behind, or when she was offered a last confession by a priest. The sentence of death was read out and upon the final word the sergeant in command called his troops to attention. He brought his sword up and, after a moment’s pause, drew the sword down shouting ‘tirez’.

Unlike Mell’s performance, Mata Hari did not lift her hand and rest it against her forehead. The sets did not come undone, dresses did not fall apart, scenery did not lift into the air while the other half remained on the ground, and no one was laughing. This was no Keystone Cops aesthetic. As

²⁵¹ “A Story,” *Le Petit Parisien* (Paris, France), 16 Oct. 1917.

the British reporter Henry Wales wrote. “She did not die as actors and moving picture stars would have us believe that people die when they are shot. She did not throw up her hands nor did she plunge straight forward or straight back. Instead she seemed to collapse. Slowly, inertly, she settled to her knees, her head up always, and without the slightest change of expression on her face.”²⁵² What transpired was a scene of both success and failure.

Success in execution, but failure in living. From Wales’s description Mata Hari continued to watch her executioners as she slowly fell backwards, her legs twisted beneath her. “She lay prone, motionless, with her face turned towards the sky. A non-commissioned officer, who accompanied a lieutenant, drew his revolver from the big, black holster strapped about his waist. Bending over, he placed the muzzle of the revolver almost—but not quite—against the left temple of the spy. He pulled the trigger, and the bullet tore into the brain of the woman.”²⁵³ Unlike the dramatic and inaccurate performance by Marissa Mell, these were the final moments of the real-life Mata Hari. Yet, it is here in such a moment of finality that the analysis of failure must begin. Indeed, as it will become clear, in espionage final moments are often the moments of departure and (re)generation.

In the first chapter of this dissertation the analysis was dedicated to the identification and contextualization of success, with a specific focus on

²⁵² Henry Wales, “The Execution of Mata Hari,” *International News Service* (Paris, France), 19 Oct. 1917.

²⁵³ Wales, “The Execution of Mata Hari.”

espionage as applied theatre practice. As has been acknowledged, this chapter is concerned with the idea of failure. Throughout this final portion, the project will draw parallels between failure as it is demonstrated, produced, and identified by theatre and performance, alongside instances of failure in espionage. To articulate these findings, the chapter will employ two case studies. Those of the Dutch agent Mata Hari as well as the Russian operative Maria Butina, a woman who supposedly gained access to the upper echelons of the National Rifle Association and to prominent members of the United States Republican Party. Not only will parallels be drawn between the two case studies, but in drawing such parallels a comparison and contrasting will be made between these two examples with instances of failure in theatre and performance, providing insight into the structural issues and techniques of espionage, particularly when considered through a theatre and performance studies lens.

The Mata Hari Case: A Failure

A complicated history, the story of Mata Hari is one the great stories of espionage. Born in the Dutch city of Leeowarden in 1876 Mata Hari is perhaps one of the most infamous female spies in the 20th century. This cannot be overstated. Indeed, as Rosie White explains “the infamous spy executed by the French during the First World War, haunts all subsequent

accounts of women and espionage.”²⁵⁴ But it is not merely that to consider women and espionage is to be obliged to understand the story of Mata Hari. This Dutch spy also presents a unique opportunity to examine the relation of espionage to theatre and performance because Hari was a performer before and while she was a spy. But the fact that she was also, at times, a prostitute and mistress of high powered men cannot be ignored if only because this aspect of her life plays into widely circulated—and indeed, problematic—cultural assumptions that society makes about the kind of women who work in the theatre and in espionage. Those cultural assumptions imply that female actors and spies are cut from the same cloth and at some level, the cultural assumption is that this cloth is woven from the fabric of moral failure. As tragic as the story of Mata Hari is, there is thus something particularly special about having a case study which features an individual who participates in the oldest and second-oldest professions simultaneously, especially since acting is sometimes offered as an alternative to the notion that espionage is the world’s second oldest profession.

Women have a long and relatively well-documented role in espionage history. From antiquity to modern day, across culture, and in both governmental and industrial instances, women feature well. We see this in the narrative of Delilah, arguably the mythological precursor to Mata Hari; “Delilah

²⁵⁴ Rosie White, “‘You’ll Be the Death of Me’: Mata Hari and the Myth of the Femme Fatale,” in *The Femme Fatale: Images, Histories, Contexts*, ed. Helen Hanson and Catherine O’Rawe, (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 72.

shines as leading lady; shamelessly seductive, she is the quintessential femme fatale.”²⁵⁵ As a synopsis, Delilah was the lover of the Biblical figure Sampson and was employed by the Philistines to identify the source of Sampson’s god-like strength. Through a series of duplicitous and theatrical exchanges—some of which seem to hint at early instances of sexual and consensual BDSM²⁵⁶—Delilah discovers it is Sampson’s hair which gives him his power. Only Mata Hari might present as a worthy challenger for the title of most infamous femme fatale. She and Delilah are both employed by government officials to gather intelligence. They are also both often described as sexually voracious and immoral, their stories governed by acts of deceit, sexual liaisons, and descriptions of striking beauty, all wound into a caricature of the femme fatale. Such a determination governs the reception not only of the history of people like Mata Hari and Delilah, but their reception during the time in which they lived.

The femme fatale, while more famous for the portrayals in literature, film, theatre, and art more broadly, exists beyond the artistic representation and is found throughout narratives of real-life as a cultural construct. As Hanson and O’Rawe write, “[t]he femme fatale is thus read simultaneously as both entrenched cultural stereotype and yet never quite fully known: she is

²⁵⁵ Caroline Blyth, *Reimagining Delilah's Afterlives as Femme Fatale: The Lost Seduction*, (New York, USA: T&T Clark Bloomsbury, 2017), 1.

²⁵⁶ This is addressed more in depth in Marco Derks fascinating and provocative article “If I Be Shaven, Then My Strength Will Go from Me”.

always beyond definition.”²⁵⁷ And entrenched they are. So much so that the case of Hari cannot be analyzed without this consideration. The idea of the femme fatale is historically rife throughout espionage history and beyond “the idea of the femme fatale is ‘as old as Eve’, or indeed as old as Lilith, Adam’s first wife, turned demon and succubus, the femme fatale, at least in Western literature and art, ‘is only formulated as a clear and recognizable ‘type’ in the late nineteenth century.”²⁵⁸ To put it simply, the context that surrounds the Mata Hari-femme fatale story is governed by centuries-old misogynistic framing, which is its own kind of moral failure. But so too is it part of the context that imbues the notion of failure and success by those who engage with Mata Hari. The challenge is to not only understand the failure of her endeavors in espionage, but to also consider the failures in the context of the gendered construction of womanhood that governs the notion of femme fatale. These constructions of womanhood always bring a new aspect to espionage, much like in any other male-dominated and controlled endeavor.

The same is true of Mata Hari’s intermittent profession as a prostitute. It governed perception of her in the time she was alive, during her trial and execution, and has continued to do so since her death. Her sex, gender and her liberal notions of sexual interaction contextualized her perception by

²⁵⁷ Helen Hanson and Catherine O’Rawe. “Introduction: ‘Cherchez la Femme’” in *The Femme Fatale: Images, Histories, Contexts*, ed. Helen Hanson and Catherine O’Rawe, (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 2.

²⁵⁸ Hanson and O’Rawe, 3.

others; particularly those in government agencies. Her failure to 'act' chastely in the eyes of others affected her throughout her life as a mother, lover, performer, and public figure. More pressingly, this supposed failure influenced her trial and led in part to her conviction. In France during the early 1900's the common perception was that 'loose women' were more likely to partake in illegal work. In her monograph, *Femme Fatale: Love, Lies, and the Unknown Life of Mata Hari*, Pat Shipman provides a quote sourced from Mata Hari's interrogator that sums up this belief amongst French society perfectly: "Her long stories left us skeptical. This woman set herself up as a sort of Messalina [the sexually voracious wife of Claudius I], dragging a throng of adorers behind her chariot, on the triumphant road of the theatrical success.... It was not possible that the enemy, who searched the five parts of the world to find agents, would leave untouched one with these exceptional qualities and when, after two years of war, the woman Zelle entered into the office of Captain Ladoux, it was certain that she was no virgin in espionage matters."²⁵⁹ Terms such as "coquettish" and "successive liaisons" pepper the report that lead to the charges against Mata Hari. The determined deviant behavior of Hari was a sign of moral failure in French society during the early 20th century, and thus a failure of a performance of everyday life that allowed for the charges to stand.

²⁵⁹ Pat Shipman, *Femme Fatale: Love, Lies, and the Unknown Life of Mata Hari*. 1st ed., (New York, USA: Harper Collins e-books, 2007), Kindle Edition, 336-337.

However, Mata Hari's supposed deviant behavior and moral failings can also be read as personal successes. Indeed, it was her utilization of such subversive and 'immoral' behavior that allowed her to succeed in a world where men were typically the ones who established moralities, ran intelligences agencies, served as military officers, and held the positions of judge, jury, and executioner. The trouble, as Mary Craig notes in her book *Tangled Web: Mata Hari Dancer, Courtesan, Spy*, was that Mata Hari was particularly fond of men with power. "She actively sought out her lovers. She had several, sometimes seeing more than one on the same day. She was particularly fond of military men; a dangerous preference in wartime, compounded by the fact that she collected lovers from several nationalities. And, probably most damning of all, Mata Hari appeared to like sex."²⁶⁰ Such active pursuit served her well in establishing a life that was financially stable from shortly after her second arrival in Paris to the weeks before she was arrested. She rebelled against social convention, her success in surviving an unfair world, but her failing and downfall as well. It was the perception and context of deviance and womanhood that, in so many ways, exacerbated the speed at which Mata Hari was tried, and influenced the judgement rendered: execution. It is her execution that helps tease out how failure exists in espionage, particularly when viewed through a theatre and performance lens.

²⁶⁰ Mary W. Craig, *Tangled Web: Mata Hari Dancer, Courtesan, Spy*, (Stroud, UKL History Press, 2017), Chapter 10, Kindle Edition.

Executions themselves are imbued with performativity and theatricality. They are “awesome rituals of human sacrifice through which the state dramatizes its absolute power and monopoly on violence,”²⁶¹ Dwight Conquergood suggests in his article “Lethal Theatre: Performance, Punishment, and the Death Penalty.” This is just as true for the United States in the present day as it was for France in the early 20th century. An execution is a demonstration of state power through the refined and trained movements of the military personnel firing their weapons, just as it is for the offers of a last confession. The citation that Conquergood makes at the beginning of his article is of Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of a Prison*. In this publication, Foucault ties the ritual of state execution to the domination of the human body by the state. The question that arises is: to what end? This question is in many ways challenging to answer, but if we consider this from the perspective of Althusser the domination of the human body by the state is ultimately a redistribution and reaffirmation of power for the state to continue its domination. The cyclical dialectic of power and tactics of retaining power.

This retaining and reaffirmation of power is enabled through various aspects of the ritual of execution. This would include the judicial pronouncement of the death sentence that was read immediately before Mata Hari was shot; the location of the execution at the barracks of Caserne de Vincennes, which limited public access and helped maintain the opaque lens

²⁶¹ Dwight Conquergood, “Lethal Theatre: Performance, Punishment, and the Death Penalty.” *Theatre Journal* 54, no. 3 (2002): 342.

through which Mata Hari was viewed; or the use of eleven shots from twelve soldiers, a theatrical technique that is reminiscent of bad sleight-of-hand absolving them of any guilt for participating and taking someone's life, also often called the 'conscience round'. The shooting is particularly rife with theatrical or performative tactics that enables state domination. Consider the actions that the officer and Lieutenant take after Mata Hari is fusilladed. He walks up to the lifeless body and shoots her again at close range in the head. The "coup de grâce" or "blow of mercy," as it is often referred to, is a particularly gruesome performative act that blurs the line between humane action and the desecration of a body. This action also serves to perform finality and to communicate simultaneously a domination of state over body, native over foreigner, man over woman, normalcy over deviance, and, as the French would have people believe, ally over enemy. Yet just as the execution is a ritual event of state power, particularly when viewed from the perspective of the state itself, so too is there theatricality and performativity within the execution from the vantage point of the executed.

In the case of Mata Hari, those who witnessed the execution were captivated by the manner in which she approached the execution grounds and held herself through the whole ordeal. Her choice to proceed without blindfold turns the power of spectatorship, which is a part of the state's domineering, on its head. The executors become the watched performers through an act of obstinacy and self-determination. Her failure to submit is a final instance of subversion that reads to everyone watching, as evidenced by

the quote from Wales. It is Mata Hari's understanding that the blindfold is part of the costume of dominance; a tactic that enables the French military and political machinery to advance. The same determination can be used to describe her refusal of last confession. The rejection of the mainstream religious last-right offered by the dominant religion in a country whose identity has been so closely linked to such a religion, is yet another act of defiance rupturing a part of the execution ritual employed to dominate her as an extension of the populace.

In some sense, each of these instances are forms of failure. And while it could be argued that the execution of Mata Hari is a success from the standpoint of the French, the lack of ability to control the execution in totality also signifies a failure on their end. Simultaneously this is where Mata Hari succeeds in her final moments. Consider these examples again as I draw out how one such instance constitutes both failure and success. In the first example I addressed the theatricality that is viewed in the execution. When the execution is considered as performative ritual the success or transformative result ultimately lies in the destruction of an individual. Yet, when Mata Hari intervenes, or miss-executes the role of the prisoner, she disrupts the ritual aspect of the execution. Yes, Mata Hari still dies, but the ritual power that rests in the execution has been chipped away at. She has called into question, or at least provided an alternate interpretation of, or transformative result for, the ritual for those watching. This rests on her failure to submit that in turn is a success of autonomy. The success found in her

turning down the use of a blindfold is a capitalization of spectatorship while also a failure on the part of the state and its agents to exercise total control.

What should be apparent is that failure is not a finite singularity within a given instance. To put this more succinctly I turn back to Colin Feltham who explains that beyond the lack of performance or underperformance, failure also “logically implies antecedent non-failure: all was apparently running smoothly or looking perfect, as expected, before this negative event. It is as if we hold a belief, perhaps a fantasy, that things should always function without fail.”²⁶² But this is not always true, as Feltham explains. And the analysis of Mata Hari’s execution seems to suggest that Feltham is correct. Not everything should or can always function perfectly. By the admission of many artists in history, the processes of creation, composition, and execution (the doing kind, not the terminal kind) are not flawless. They are messy, organic, and ever-changing. To echo Feltham further, failure exists on a spectrum of unsuccessful attempts and executions, and manifests in all the earlier identified categories that I listed in the previous paragraph. Part of the consideration of failure is contextually based, as I hinted at earlier.

Much like any analytical consideration, an understanding of failure is dependent on the vantage point from which an analysis is undertaken or perspective through which it is conducted. Consider again the context of Mata Hari. In some instances we might consider the execution to be her failure as a spy. She was caught and thus executed. We can also consider this to be a

²⁶² Feltham, *Failure*, 17.

success on the part of the French government, the military, and the intelligence services. Yet it could also be that Mata Hari fulfilled her objectives and was only caught afterwards, this would then mean that in some capacity she was successful, while the French military and its allies failed. Further still, there is strong historical case to be made that Mata Hari was in fact never a spy. This would then mean that the French intelligence services failed in their apprehending of an agent and, more ethically dubious, in their justified execution of a human being.

Another perspective on the success-failure dichotomy relates to an instance when Mata Hari was attempting to travel back to the Netherlands. On this journey the British “mistakenly identified her as a woman called Clara Benedix, who, like Mata Hari, was suspect and on the intelligence services’ list of those to be watched.”²⁶³ Like the situations teased apart earlier, this instance can be read in a multitude of manners. Let us assume that author Mary Craig’s inference is correct and that Mata Hari was mistakenly identified as someone else. This would suggest that the British and French not only failed in their efforts to identify Mata Hari as an agent, but also to detain Clara Benedix—who was clearly a person of interest. On the other hand, Mata Hari’s brief detention was enough to have her flagged and reported to the French authorities, who in turn identified her as a person of interest that the British should keep tabs on. This would then suggest that Mata Hari failed in her attempts to move through Europe undetected. A third possible reading of

²⁶³ Craig, *Tangled Web*, Chapter 11.

this situation is that Mata Hari was, in fact, Clara Benedix—an agent who has never been fully identified by historians—and was not caught by the British and the French and thus succeeds in shielding her alter ego while the Allies fail in their attempts to detain Benedix. The possible reading of whether an undertaking or instance constitutes failure or success is incredibly varied. Part of the reason that this is the case is because the denotation of success and failure is dependent on the perspective and context of a given undertaking. It is also the case because of how espionage has been conceived of and framed throughout history.

The Blurring of Success and Failure

Up until this point the analysis of the Mata Hari has been an exercise in understanding both perspectives of failure and success in any given moment. It is in many ways a demonstration of the potential multitudinous reality that an undertaking in espionage can be identified as having. The trouble with the analysis so far is that it does nothing to challenge the assumption that endeavors in espionage are isolated instances that have not been pre-calculated. And this is most certainly not the case. The blurring, or perhaps I should title it 'lack of distinction', between success and failure is not only an issue of analytical positioning, but is in fact built into the constructs of espionage and any intelligence efforts. Support for intelligence initiatives is predicated on the position that through such support a nation, or even corporation, will be successful in their efforts.

In the case of Mata Hari the support for the French Intelligence Services 'La Deuxième Bureau' as it was called then, was due to a belief that through such support the French, and by extension the Allies, would obtain the upper hand in the conflict with the Central Powers of WWI. Mary Craig documents the efforts made by Georges Ladoux, the head of La Deuxième Bureau during the First World War, to convince the upper ranks of the French government to support intelligence work. "By September 1915, France and her allies had suffered several military defeats. The war had changed and the national mood was ugly. General Joffre was out of favour with the government and a culture of blame was starting to develop. It was at that moment that Ladoux stressed again the role of espionage, both in generating military intelligence and thwarting enemy agents."²⁶⁴ As it was believed, success in obtaining intelligence from the Central Powers as well as countering intelligence efforts by these nations would translate to success in the military campaign. But if only necessary in conflict situations, why then when the conflict eventually ended did the intelligence agencies continue to exist?

This question drives to the heart of how success and failure can co-mingle within espionage efforts. As Knightley wrote in his book *The Second Oldest Profession*, espionage agencies are difficult to get rid of once established because "the agencies justify their peacetime existence by

²⁶⁴ Craig, Chapter 10.

promising to provide timely warning of a threat to national security. It does not matter to them whether that threat is real or imaginary, and agencies have shown themselves quite capable of inventing a theatre when none have existed.”²⁶⁵ The term ‘theatre’ used by Knightley is no accident. This term in military and intelligence parlance, borrowed from the artistic undertakings, has direct connotations to how an event is framed. In the case of espionage, the distinct framed performance taking place, or proposed to potentially take place, is a narrative of conflict between adversaries. In this sense espionage is not only performative and theatrical, but also dramatic, and in this respect both the success and failure of espionage ultimately has to do with its success or failure as performance, theatre and/or drama.

Dramatic structure can also be applied to other instances within espionage, including the tactics used by intelligences agencies to persuade governments and corporations to undertake clandestine work. If we consider the trial of Mata Hari within this framework it has strong echoes of what Richard Harbinger would refer to as “Trial by Drama.”²⁶⁶ (177). This could further be extended to Mata Hari’s execution, which not only reads as performative but also dramatic. In both instances the event is defined by the adversarial core structure identified by Harbinger.²⁶⁷ The same realities

²⁶⁵ Knightley, *The Second Oldest Profession*, 6.

²⁶⁶ Richard Harbinger, “Trial by Drama” *Judicature* 55 No. 3. (1971), 122.

²⁶⁷ Harbinger, 122.

govern the methods through which espionage agencies justify their existence; there is an adversary external to the agencies and the institutions they are affiliated with. Due to this 'reality' espionage is necessary for successfully deterring such an adversary. Parallel to this, the execution of Mata Hari is a theatrical event that communicates successful intelligence work: an agent of the adversary was apprehended through successful intelligence work and her capture is proof of the success. But just as success exists within a particular context or event, failure also reads in a given scenario. In more plain terms, the success also hints at what might have been potential failure.

Capitalizing on this, espionage bureaus have developed a strong ability to conjure up success out of nothing and perpetuate a state of action and self-justification. This self-justification is based on three principles, according to Knightley, and these three principles "ensure survival".²⁶⁸ He writes; "The first is that in the secret world it may be impossible to distinguish success from failure. A timely warning of attack allows the intended victim to prepare. This causes the aggressor to change his mind; the warning then appears to have been wrong. The second proposition is that failure can be due to incorrect analysis of the agencies accurate information—the warning was there but the government failed to heed it [...] The third proposition is that the agency could have offered timely warning had it not been starved of funds."²⁶⁹ Herein lies the perplexing, yet rich reality of espionage. These

²⁶⁸ Knightley, *The Second Oldest Profession*, 6.

²⁶⁹ Knightley, 6.

justifications are rooted in a sort of theatrically based persuasion. Intelligence agencies have the ability to convince organizations, whether governmental or corporate, that there is an adversary that is posing a threat—even if one does not exist. Following this the agencies determine that the adversary should be stopped and to do so will require efforts in intelligence work. Then, if an adversary does not appear they are able to justify their role by asserting that the absence of the adversary is proof of their effective work. Whereas if an adversary does appear the agency is able to utilize such an instance as proof yet again that intelligence efforts are required. In effect, intelligence agencies justify their existence irrespective of the reality because of their self-justifying reasoning. Moreover, intelligence efforts not only serve as a form of Repressive State Apparatus and Ideological State Apparatus, as was identified in the introduction and reaffirmed in the analysis of the execution of Mata Hari, but such efforts also occupy a place where failure is transformed into success and new life. Espionage is (re)generative, and failure is thus a necessary prerequisite for espionage's continued existence. Every failure is nothing short of a justification for further and more extensive and broader espionage.

What Knightley lays out for his reader almost seems as if it could have been taken from the playbook of La Deuxième Beureau in the lead up to Mata Hari's execution. As historians have identified, the likely scenario that befell Mata Hari is that she was used as a sacrificial lamb in an effort to shore up support for espionage efforts within the French military establishment and to

galvanize support from the French public more broadly. Likewise, the Germans exploited her by allowing her sacrifice to take place to “distract attention from other agents.”²⁷⁰ The strongest evidence that supports this position is that by the time Mata Hari was employed by the Allied forces, the French had already begun to intercept coded German broadcasts, which the Germans were aware of but continued to send anyway in manner that easily identified Mata Hari as an agent of theirs. The speculation that arises from this is that the Germans used Hari as a distraction to allow agents like Clara Benedix more maneuverability in their work. Concerning the French, “Ladoux testified that he had never employed her as an agent for France, but had merely pretended to do so in order to entrap her.”²⁷¹ Herein lies yet another strange reality found in espionage; that shared success can be found for both opposing parties within a failed event. This is particularly pronounced in the fast-moving pace of immediate conflict such as war, but is likewise the case within less intensive periods such as in corporate espionage. This ability to generate success out of failure is an intriguing aspect of espionage. Indeed, it runs against the very notion of success and failure as finite instances. But this (re)generational ability is found in other areas, and one of those is theatre.

²⁷⁰ Craig, *Tangled Web*, Chapter 13

²⁷¹ Shipman, *Femme Fatale*, 340.

The Death of Character is Poetic Failure

Before progressing any further I will now take this moment to kill off Mata Hari. Who remains is the woman Margaretha Zelle McLeod. The reason that I can, and will, undertake such a terminal act is because the character created by Zelle McLeod is just that, a character—a construct of a woman who is performing a role. The richness in this case-study is that Margaretha Zelle McLeod was at various points navigating upwards of three, perhaps even four, identities within a given instance. These included her original birth identity, her identity of exotic dancer, as well as her identities as both German and French agents. The most famous persona—her character as the exotic dancer—was formed out of both the necessity to survive after arriving in Paris, and due to her artistic success. It was, as Mary Craig notes, “a shrewd move, blurring the lines even more about her origins.”²⁷² This was a performance that tapped into the exoticism at the center of the Orientalist art movement captivating much of the Western world at the time. The formulated identity developed by Margaretha Zelle McLeod capitalized on ‘otherness’, while the execution by French authorities was, as suggested earlier, a resounding rejection of otherness.

The death of Zelle McLeod and her exotically fashioned character is remarkable for a myriad of reasons beyond the theatricality presented throughout the staging of the execution. One of the more interesting instances

²⁷² Craig, *Tangled Web*, Chapter 6.

that concerns this study is how Zelle McLeod's death falls within the notion of the "Death of Character" as described by Elinor Fuchs. Fuchs' article on the subject, which precedes Hans Thies-Lehman's publication *Post-Dramatic Theatre* by nearly two decades, proposed that a shift in live performance took place in the transition from modernism to post-modernism, defined in part by the decentering of character; "just as Character once supplanted Action, so Character in turn is being eclipsed."²⁷³ The reformulation proposed by Fuchs one decade later in her monograph *The Death of Character* identifies the exploding of 'character' in domains both inside and outside the traditional theatre space as being central to the shift of what we might now call "post-dramatic theatre". In respect to this project, one of the more resonant postulations within Fuchs writing is how the "death of character" applies to a lived reality. Echoing Richard Foreman's speculations on ontological hysteric theater, which Fuchs describes as "the vision that what we have taken to be human identity disintegrates on scrutiny into discrete sentences and gestures that can be perceived as objects," she then extends this position to "the divisions [of her] own character."²⁷⁴ In turn I would apply this to Zelle McLeod's alternate persona and her very being. The death of both Zelle MacLeod and her various characters are a result of failure and are theatrical in nature, but also generative of success. With the destruction of MacLeod's

²⁷³ Elinor Fuchs, *The Death of Character: Perspectives on Theater After Modernism* (Bloomington, USA: Indiana University Press, 1996), 171.

²⁷⁴ Fuchs, 172-173.

character comes the destruction of her actions, sentences, gestures and more. The death of a clandestine operative's character not only signifies the destruction of who they represent, but also the individual qualities of such a persona. In the case of Mata Hari, with her destruction comes the elimination of her behavior which might include her enjoyment of sex or her so-called dance performance, but also the threat she represented as a foreign agent. Furthermore, and in respect to acts of espionage, such destruction is a permanent purging of the knowledge an agent carries with them. In a sense it is the termination of the embodied archive. Espionage in turn relies on this activity. If we think about one of the three central tenants of espionage as a phenomenon identified by Knightly—that espionage relies on instances of success in combating foreign agents to justify its existence—it is possible to conclude that the destruction of character acts as the post-dramatic event that communicates this theatrical ruse.

The suggestion that Fuchs makes aides us in placing the death of Margarethe Zelle McLeod's characters, and any other characters employed by clandestine agents, within the tradition of post-dramatic theatre. Indeed, it could be argued that espionage as signified by the death of character is an instance of post-dramatic or post-modern performance which precedes its theorization. It might even be argued that espionage not only acts as the vanguard of military and political initiative, but is also within the vanguard of the post-modern theatre tradition. This possibility requires even further consideration. The death of character gestures towards a particular type of

performance event, one that Fuchs has described as “Performance Theatre”. She explains that “Performance Theater bears some similarity to the conventional theater of dramatic texts in situating the theatrical event in an imaginative world evoked by visual, lighting, and sound effects, and an ensemble of actors. Yet it is like performance art in two signal regards: in its continuous awareness of itself as performance, and in its unavailability for representation.”²⁷⁵ Positioning Zelle McLeod’s exotic dance character within this framework is only logical, particularly when McLeod reinvents herself and begins to identify publically with the name of ‘Mata Hari’ outside of the theatre and dance venues she frequented. The erotic character McLeod creates and lives as is a continuously aware performance blurring the lines between the real and the representational. The same is true for the agent identities employed by Zelle McLeod, which is also true of any clandestine agent identity. The outward persona becomes a lived reality while at the same time wholly representational.

Representation is perhaps the most critical element when thinking through the death of character. When considering the notion of representation often a mimetic understanding of the word is drawn upon. But espionage blurs the boundary between the representational and the non-representational, while also embracing failure. In her work *Performance Theatre and the Poetics of Failure* Sarah Jane Bailes identifies, as Feltham does, that *failure* is often positioned as an undesirable outcome, or at the very

²⁷⁵ Fuchs, 79.

least something that should not happen. Bailes explains that failure can be read in a multitude of manners but, in her estimation, theatre and performance are most often concerned with two. “More than a concern with representations that fail (of which clearly there are many) it is the failure of representation that focuses my inquiry.”²⁷⁶ For this project I am concerned with both. My reading of Bailes’ work informs me that there is significant cross-over between both the failure of representation and representations that fail. Due to the cyclical nature of failure and success, to most effectively understand the relationship between espionage and theatre and performance, these two views of representation and failure should not be considered independently from each other. To do so would be like analyzing a mirror and only thinking about the image within the mirror, while ignoring how that mirror comes to reflect the image in the first place.

With the goal of understanding how representations fail and a failure of representation occurs, it is necessary to cycle back to the understanding of failure. What Bailes identifies, like Knightley, is that failure is not only a result but also a (re)generative departure point. She sets out the parameters of failure with a focus on two core ideas: the first concerns Fuchs “Performance Theatre” and the second J.L. Austin’s “performatives”. In invoking Fuchs’ definition, Bailes situates her work within a lineage that is indebted to avant-

²⁷⁶ Sarah Jane Bailes, *Performance Theatre and the Poetics of Failure: Forced Entertainment, Goat Island, Elevator Repair Service* (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2011), 12

gardism. Her citation of terms such as “live art,”²⁷⁷ “experimental theatre,”²⁷⁸ and “performance art,”²⁷⁹ to name but a few, further illustrates the cross-pollination that was, and still is, taking place in these artistic endeavors. She groups together work by companies such as Goat Island, Forced Entertainment and Elevator Repair Service in an effort to prove that the failure at the core of this style of artistic work is rooted in aesthetic and compositional methods that embrace failure, which at their core are an embracing of the ephemeral nature of live art. Moreover, she explains how failure can be used as a compositional tactic in the production of theatre events to illustrate the tenuousness of success. Espionage can and should be viewed within many of these parameters. As has been noted, clandestine initiatives most certainly embrace failure as a practice, and even build moments of failure into their strategies, such as the telegraphs sent by the Germans that outed Mata Hari. Espionage and its undertakers are also highly aware of the ephemeral quality of moments and endeavors, and often exploit this nature to further their initiatives: instructions are destroyed, informant networks are setup to be dismantled quickly, and every undertaken action is meant to be imbued with plausible deniability.

²⁷⁷ Bailes, 7.

²⁷⁸ Bailes, 18.

²⁷⁹ Bailes, 21.

The aesthetics of failure and representation are also of significant importance. What they offer is an understanding of how failure is both identified and imagined. In respect to identifying failure, there is perhaps no greater example than the death of character. Such destruction of character offers perspectives on the instances of failure, and thus the generation point of successes. Indeed, if the identified dialectic were understood like the Ancient Egyptian Orobouros the instance of failure would be where the mouth of the serpent begins to consume its own tail acting as sustenance for its own regeneration. The insight that an aesthetic understanding of failure offers does not end there. As O’Gorman and Werry write in the introduction to *Performance Research: On Failure*, an employment of failure and representation in performance “strategically mobilizes failure to imagine alternatives foreclosed by the normative tyranny of success and expected outcomes.”²⁸⁰ Herein lies one of the central ideas of failure and success in espionage as theatre and performance—imagined futures. As Knightley might suggest, the imagined alternative is a potent force in the future justification of espionage. The technique used by clandestine agencies to justify their funding is to demand that governments and corporations imagine the ‘conflagration’ that will take place if they are not successful in their work. Understanding the aesthetics of the ‘failure of representation’ along with how ‘representations fail’ within espionage allows us to conduct an analysis of

²⁸⁰ Róisín O’Gorman and Margaret Werry, “Editorial Introduction” in *Performance Research: On Failure (On Pedagogy)* 17, No. 1 (2012), 2.

clandestine work. Such potential and imagined futures are truly tactical, helping espionage agencies push forward their agenda. More interestingly still, it is an instance of futurity that departs from utopic use²⁸¹.

The theatricality around the death of character is not the only area of espionage in which failure is engaged. Much like the broken-down elements identified by Foreman in hysteric ontological theatre, the performative elements in the day-to-day exchanges that are at the core of espionage also encounter instances of failure. In an earlier part of this dissertation I cited an example of when an agent failed in his undercover work and was caught out in his role as a ‘spy’ during the Second World War. The story highlighted how the agent, after landing in France undercover, proceeded to enter a café and request a *café noire*—a black coffee—even though milk was being rationed and all coffees ordered were assumed to come black without the distinction being made in the ordering process. In this instance, the operative was immediately outed as a foreign agent due to his misfire within the cultural and transactional exchange. Such misfires and misexecutions are the second core idea influencing Bailes’ conceptualization of poetic failure. She writes that failure “indexes the infelicitous outcome of a designated task or action, to invoke J.L. Austin [...] The act—a performative speech act in his discussion—always exhibits a number of conditional needs or properties to ensure its

²⁸¹ For more information on utopian and dystopian theatre and performance see *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theatre* by Jill Dolan and *Performing Utopia* by Bowditch and Vissicaro.

felicitous outcome.”²⁸² The central notion presented by Bailes is that failure in performance (particularly performance theatre) hinges on the idea of felicitous/infelicitous outcomes. The companies at the center of her study embrace infelicity and lean into these moments with gusto. She explains that utilizing such a technique depicts a moment where the experience of watching this work is much like seeing the “haphazard disassembling of its parts.”²⁸³ These instances of failure, identified in this case as intentional infelicity, are another important point for this chapter. Part of the significance in identifying these aspects of Bailes’ definition of failure is that it provides a rich departure for understanding failure in modes of theatre and performance, and more specifically contemporary espionage. Understanding that a post-modern performance perspective enables us to view the disassembled parts of a whole, further allows us to consider both the micro and the macro instances of espionage within a given context. To more closely examine Fuch’s “Death of Character” and Bailes’ “Poetic Failure” we must turn to a contemporary case-study of clandestine affairs.

Femme Raté

As a bass drum, high-hat symbol, and guitar riff pulse, a video begins with a close-up on two yellow-orange insulated travel cups. A figure sitting behind the cups and wearing a black shirt with the green logo of *RT*—the

²⁸² Bailes, 4.

²⁸³ Bailes, 34

Russian News Channel *Russia Today*—reaches forward and moves the cups to either side revealing the words ‘Foreign Agent’ displayed on their t-shirt. The anonymous individual then reaches down and lifts another cup to the table and places it in between the previous two, now presenting three insulated travel mugs upon which is the Cyrillic script ‘БУБУБУ’—transliterated to ‘BU-BU-BU’ and suggestive of a multiplicity of puns, entendre, and innuendo, but effectively equivalent to the English ‘BLAH-BLAH-BLAH’. The nameless individual begins to turn the central mug and more writing is revealed. But just before the entirety of the script is in view the camera cuts to four news clips in rapid fire succession, briefly pivoting back to the turning cup in between each clip. Each of the news segments rails against the detainment of a Russian woman in the United States, citing the outrageousness of the charges laid against her and the unjustified prison sentence that followed. As the camera shot snaps back to the coffee cups the individual finishes turning the central mug allowing viewers to finally read the text—БУБУБУТИНА—in English ‘BUBUBUTINA’. The camera zooms out and sitting behind the mugs is the convicted Russian asset Maria Butina who was arrested in the United States in 2018 and deported back to Russia in 2019. Cheekily, she half smiles at the camera, shrugs her shoulders, and states in Russian, “Well, home at last.” Slyly suggesting relief at returning to Russia after her stint in the United States, while simultaneously playing into her star power as the woman who effectively infiltrated the National Rifle Association and the United States Republican Party.

This testosterone-charged edgy rock star aesthetic video was the promotion use to introduce Maria Butina as the new host of the program *Wonderful Russia Bu-Bu-Bu*, a YouTube talk-show supported by RT—the state-controlled television network headquartered in Moscow with an international reach. As Nathan Hodge suggests, “[t]he title appears to parody a catchphrase used by Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, who often refers sarcastically in his own popular videos to the ‘wonderful Russia of the future’ – without Russian President Vladimir Putin.”²⁸⁴ Butina’s hosting of a state sponsored television program may seem like a strange fate to befall a person who is, arguably, one of the most infamous foreign agents to be caught in the United States in the past quarter-century, but it is not without precedent. Indeed, the former Russian agent Anna Chapman who was arrested and deported in 2010 as a part of the United States *Illegals Program*, became a spokesperson for the Moscow Institute of Art and Industry, engaged in a photoshoot with Maxim Magazine (bearing almost no clothes, though evidently able to dawn a pistol), and maintains a substantial following on social media platforms, following her arrival back in Russia. Evidence that success can indeed blossom out of failure in espionage work.

While Chapman conducts her armed photoshoot post-deportation, Butina caters to the gun-loving portion of both the Russian and United States

²⁸⁴ Nathan Hodge, “Maria Butina, Convicted of Being a Foreign Agent in the US, Will Host Russian State-Funded TV show,” *CNN*, 17 December, 2019. <https://www.cnn.com/2019/12/17/media/maria-butina-rt-tv-show-intl/index.html>

populace in advance of her arrival in the US in 2016, as well as during her time as a student. In her photoshoot for the Russian edition of GQ Magazine, Butina, sporting a variety of handguns, buckles up stiletto heels by *Guess*, dons sunglasses by *Mykita* and earrings by *Christian Dior*, and pulls on leather gloves by the lingerie company *Agent Provocateur*, to show off her support for gun-rights in industrial-chic aesthetic. Extending her weapons-advocacy to the conventions held by the National Rifle Association, Butina can be seen in a multitude of photos holding a variety of weapons which range from high capacity rifles to revolvers with barrels that have been elongated beyond practicality. Photos depict Butina with members of both the NRA executive, such as James W. Porter II and Wayne LaPierre, and members of the Republican Party, such as former senator Rick Santorum. Her rise through the ranks of both organizations is easily tracked through media releases, interviews, and photographic evidence. Thus, on July 15th, 2018, when the department of Justice announced the detainment and arrest Maria Butina, it was likely a surprise to many.

Charged with acting as a foreign agent without first registering with the United States government—a charge frequently referred to as “espionage-lite” by prosecutors²⁸⁵—she quickly entered into infamy as one of the most public cases of espionage(lite) in recent memory. Butina’s arrest and trial just

²⁸⁵ Josh Gerstein, “Mariia Butina Gets 18 Months for Russian Agent Work,” *Politico*, 26 April, 2019, <https://www.politico.com/story/2019/04/26/mariia-butina-sentenced-1290785>.

over one hundred years after the execution of Mata Hari is yet another instance of failed espionage and one of the best recent examples of espionage as theatre and performance. Moreover, the national platform that Butina has been provided with post-deportation shows how fame can associate with espionage work in the contemporary world. However, with the advent of post-dramatic theatre the circumstances and thus our understanding of espionage will have shifted. Present-day instances of clandestine affairs must be re-contextualized and warrant further scrutiny. Unlike the Mack Sennett-aesthetic of the musical *Marta Hari*, or the dramatic production of Mata Hari a.k.a Margaretha Zelle MacLeod's execution, the death of Mari Butina's character was a gun-toting, rock-and-roll sounding, industrial-chic looking event. Her initial arrest was without spectacle, her court appearances were relatively low-key and at points shrouded in secrecy, and, unlike Mata Hari, no musical rendition has been written...yet. But much like Mata Hari, Butina's career, arrest, trial, and ultimate deportation are imbued with instances of failure and thus success.

Information on Butina's early life is much less documented than Mata Hari, which may be surprising given that over one century has passed since the latter was executed. What is generally known about Butina is that she was born in 1988 in the Siberian city of Barnaul and attended Altai State University. In August of 2016 Butina entered the United States on an F1 Student Visa to begin studies at American University in Washington, D.C. The affidavit provided by the FBI during the initial charging of Butina paints a

picture of an individual who is relatively well-connected within the political world of both Russia and The United States. As described in the “Memorandum in Aid of Sentencing” filed by the Justice Department “Butina was not a spy in the traditional sense of trying to gain access to classified information to send back to her home country. She was not a trained intelligence officer. But the actions she took were nonetheless taken on behalf of the Russian Official for the benefit of the Russian Federation, and those actions had the potential to damage the national security of the United States.”²⁸⁶ It is in this simple sentence that we are offered the most incisive aspects of Butina’s espionage – that it was untrained, untraditional, and unofficial. Bizarrely, in this quote we are also told that she was a spy (just not in the traditional sense), while she has most definitely not been charged as a spy. Already the potential for failure is appearing and, as we know from Mata Hari, such qualities easily align these cases of espionage with theatre.

Prior to her arrival in the United States on a Student Visa, Butina was already in contact with prominent members of the American public via her efforts to promote gun rights in both Russia and The United States. She had attended various events hosted by The Republican Party and the NRA as an associate of Russian politician Aleksandr Porfiryevich Torshin. FBI Special Agent Kevin Helson lays out a timeline of Butina’s efforts in the affidavit provided to the courts. In the two years following her arrival on a student visa,

²⁸⁶ United States v. Mariia Butina, also known as Maria Butina, “Memorandum in Aid of Sentencing,” 18-218, Doc 101, (D.D.C. 2019), 2.

Butina attended prayer breakfasts, gun rights campaigns, and even political rallies—including one with the soon-to-be president Donald Trump—in an effort to advance the interests of the Russian Federation. In the words of Helson, her efforts were “diverse and multifaceted, including BUTINA's efforts to organize a series of ‘friendship and dialogue’ dinners.”²⁸⁷ The failure at the core of Butina’s case is as much a failure of process—not registering as a foreign agent—as it is a failure of ‘proper behavior’ and performance. At some point Butina strays from the fine balance between the characters of operative and visiting student. Instead of occupying the neutral ground of the undercover espionage agent, she moves into the character of an identifiable foreign agent, which undermines her character as a successful operative.

Games of Character Killing

In many ways Maria Butina’s path is the mirror opposite of Mata Hari’s. Whereas Hari’s career as a performer and public personality preceded the First World War and arguably laid the foundation for her engagement with espionage and ultimate execution, Butina’s engagement with espionage and her arrest literally kick-started her career as a public personality and media presence. And whereas Hari was formally identified as a spy although there is a reason to suspect she wasn’t one or wasn’t as significant of a spy as others made her out to be, Butina was not formally identified as a spy, was indicted

²⁸⁷ *United States v. Mariia Butina*, 101, 6.

and charged with espionage-like behavior, which leaves the lingering suspicion that she was more than the authorities were able to establish.

What we know about Butina is that her efforts were to infiltrate and direct (or perhaps misdirect depending on which organization/country one is allied with) powerful political organizations within the United States. Yet similar to Mata Hari her success is limited and, as much as can be understood, potentially ineffective—though it is not unreasonable to consider that there are other issues at play when the government suggests that little was accomplished. While Butina may not have the legacy of exoticism/eroticism that Mata Hari commands, she was nevertheless wedged into the femme fatale category almost immediately after her arrest. Indeed, among the organizations pushing this angle was the Federal Government of the United States. They argued in their “Memorandum in Support of Pretrial Detention” that her relationship with Paul Erikson, a well-known advocate both within the NRA and the Republican Party, was insincere. At her trial, the prosecution asserted that the relationship between Butina and Erikson “[did] not represent a strong tie to the United States because Butina appears to [have] treat[ed] it as simply a necessary aspect of her activities. For example, on at least one occasion, Butina offered an individual other than [Erikson] sex in exchange for a position within a special interest organization. Further, in papers seized by the FBI, Butina complained about living with [Erikson] and

expressed disdain for continuing to cohabitate with [him].”²⁸⁸ As with Hari a century earlier, the government centered its case against Butina around a profoundly sexist set of moralizing assumptions: that any deviation from a monogamous relationship by a woman, whether this be an exchange of goods for sex or a polyamorous relationship, was a sign of moral failure and an indication that she cannot be trusted and is therefore capable of the deceptions and betrayals inherent to the work of spies. What is presumed to be a moral failure once again serves as evidence of a detected, thwarted and thus failed attempt at espionage.

What the argument put forward by the government also shows is that exoticism and orientalism permeate the perceptions of the foreigner, particularly women. Such perceptions are not limited to issues of race, but also include language, culture, or religion. Furthermore, these issues of exoticism and the erotic indicate that women seen through an orientalist-erotic lens are then equated with untrustworthiness, deception, ulterior motive, etc. This understanding of orientalism is from the standpoint of cultural hegemony and imperialistic notions. As Codell and DelPlato explain for their readers, “[i]n oriental erotics the constructed oriental body in European culture is an object of intense desire for knowledge, power and bliss, as well as the abject site at which European meanings of ‘reason,’

²⁸⁸ United States v. Mariia Butina, also known as Maria Butina, “Memorandum in Support of Pretrial Detention,” 18-218, Doc. 8, (D.D.C. 2019), 8.

language, and social order are destabilized and constantly threatened.”²⁸⁹ In the case of Butina the term ‘European’ is extended to the Euro-heritage of the United States. Her Russian identity and persona is thus equated to exotic character and is used as the impetus for connecting the dots of clandestine affairs to destabilizing effect and duplicitousness, and back again. In this regard, little has changed over the past century in the tactics of government agencies in the Western world in their portrayal of female spies.

However, the characterization of an individual as exotic in the present day holds less sway than it did in early 20th century France. Moreover, the gambit of making such an equation runs the risk of failing to convince those observing, in this instance the adjudicator, that such ‘behavior’ is a theat. In the “Memorandum in Support of Defendant Maria Butina’s Motion For Bond Review” Butina’s lawyers pick apart the salacious orientalist-erotic logic: “The government argued that Ms. Butina’s relationship with Mr. Erickson is a ‘duplicitous relationship’ because she ‘appears to treat it as simply a necessary part of her activities’[...]The impact of this inflammatory allegation, which painted Ms. Butina as some type Kremlin-trained seductress, or spy-novel honeypot character, trading sex for access and power, cannot be

²⁸⁹ Joan DelPlato and Julie F Codell, “Introduction: Orientalism, Eroticism, and Cross-Cultural Visuality,” in *Orientalism, Eroticism and Modern Visuality in Global Cultures*, ed. Joan DelPlato and Julie F. Codell (Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2016), 13.

overstated.”²⁹⁰ In their demand for evidence, the defense was presented with a single-text exchange which was “sent in Russia between Ms. Butina and DK, her longtime friend, assistant, and public relations man for *The Right to Bear Arms* gun rights group that she had founded.”²⁹¹ What the defense attorneys for Ms. Butina determined was that their tactic of approach would be to undermine the charges of espionage through a dismantling of the characterization that the prosecution had made about Butina.

We might liken the defense’s strategy to something borrowed from Fuch’s “Death of Character.” For the defense attorneys sought to kill off the character of Butina-as-exotic-femme-fatale constructed by the prosecution and the intelligence services. They attempt to capitalize on the failure of the argument alleged by the prosecutorial team and put forward the relatively successful argument that such a description of Butina is false. While not challenging the oriental-exotic-duplicitous trope, the defense’s strategy was nonetheless a moment of success in undermining the credibility of the prosecutorial arguments in a way that employs what we have come to know as post-dramatic theatre. The remaining events in court are no different.

Throughout the court appearances that addressed the charges against Butina both the prosecution and defense encountered moments of success and failure. The most significant of these might very well be the success of

²⁹⁰ United States v. Mariia Butina, also known as Maria Butina, “Memorandum in Support of Defendant Mari Butina’s Motion for Bond Review” 18-218, Doc. 23-1, (D.D.C. 2019), 8-9.

²⁹¹ *United States v. Mariia Butina*, 23-1, 10.

the plea agreement that Butina agrees to enter with the prosecutorial team and the federal government. As Knightley would likely reason, in this instance the United States government and their intelligence agencies, namely the FBI when concerning Butina, achieves a recognition of the 'threat' they detected, which justifies the need for further support of the intelligence services. This can be seen as a failure for both Butina and the Russian Government in their efforts to politically influence members of both the Republican Party and the National Rifle Association. However, as was the case of Mata Hari, success and failure are both generative events. Even though Butina was caught and charged by the United States government, there is little denying that there was ample opportunity for her and her Russian compatriots to wage an influence campaign in the two years after her arrival in the United States. Indeed, the significant amount of political capital spent by the Trump administration on affairs concerning Russia, both in support of and against Russian interests, would indicate that there was a distinct possibility for influence. Additionally, the dialectic of success and failure is not exclusive to the United States or Western World. The demise of an agent, or even a politically aligned operative who is merely aiding political initiatives without formal training, serves as impetus for further clandestine efforts by the opposing faction, in this instance Russia

Likewise, instances of failure are generative of success. In the case of the federal intelligence agencies, their inability to identify and head-off the threat posed by Butina is a failure of performance, in this instance a failure to

perform effective counterintelligence that stops potential threats before they happen. Yet, just as the American agencies argued after the fall of the Iranian Shah, which was well-foreshadowed by intelligence reports, they may employ such failure to put forward the following argument: “If we got it wrong... then this was because we did not have enough money or the men to do a proper job. The way to correct this is obvious: fund us properly; let us off the leash.”²⁹² Such logic surely gestures towards a failure of the Russia government. If the intelligence agencies of the United States capitalize on their failure by accruing more funding and support, this will only drive cost and need for the Russian intelligence services, or any other intelligence agency leading efforts against the United States. Not only does the dialectic run between success and failure, but a dialectic exists between nations and their investment in intelligence work; echoing the arms races that so well defined the Cold War.

Butina’s entire trial—which was never really a trial—was evocative of a post-dramatic performance featuring the establishment and destruction of character, especially along the terms set out by Fuchs depicting representations that both succeed and fail. It was dislocated, performed out of order, texts were hidden, and spoken words were shielded from listeners. An event like Butina’s trial, or collection of events as Fuchs describes in her chapter “Signaling Through the Signs”, is a “curious deconstructive

²⁹² Knightley, *The Second Oldest Profession*, 365.

implosion”²⁹³ that gestures towards the postdramatic. Although Fuchs writes that in post-modern performance “the weaving of fragments never coalesces into an illusionistic reality with plot and character,”²⁹⁴ I would suggest that in the court proceedings and espionage-related government processes we are witness to both illusions and non-illusion; the place where representations both fail and succeed. While the diffusion of court-process could be reasoned as a tactic to dissuade and obfuscate the efforts of the intelligence community through the long-arm of the law and its right hand, the judiciary, such absence is just as revealing about espionage-related matters as if a standard-fair trial had taken place. Clandestine undertakings are arguably most exposed within the court of law, which out of obligation are meant to be public affairs—at least within democratic systems. What we are well-aware of is that espionage efforts rely on a lack of knowledge. They exist in a reality where linear thinking and the successful understanding of their work has the potential to undermine their claims and cause them to fail in their efforts to exist.

If we look more closely at the efforts within the court proceedings, we are also revealed a performance event that is almost exclusively a theatrical game of high-stakes ‘character-killing’—to perform a bit of word-play with Fuch’s idea. In his article “Law as Rhetoric, Rhetoric as Law: The Arts of Cultural and Communal Life” James Boyd White makes the claim that “the

²⁹³ Fuchs, *The Death of Character*, 74.

²⁹⁴ Fuchs, 78.

law is a branch of [artistic] rhetoric” intertwined with culture and community.²⁹⁵

At its core, legal proceedings are meant to establish two opposed views with the goal of rendering one as the superior argument. Every tactic employed by a lawyer leans into the dramatic issues at the heart of the exchange. As Julie Peters explains “[t]rials and theatre (it is noted) share an underlying structural similarity or have overlapping functions.”²⁹⁶ If we take what Peters says to be true, and consider White’s position that law, and thus legal exchanges, are rooted in artistic rhetorical impetus, while governed by Harbinger’s “trial by drama”, we can understand that the arguments and counterarguments within the court setting are meant to undermine the very nature of the argument put forward by a legal representative, and by extension whomever or whatever they represent. In a sense this would suggest that the rhetorical argumentation of legal proceedings, as tied to the capabilities of lawyers to put forward a convincing argument, links the exchange to their character of capable rhetorician, and in the case of Butina, her claim of not being a spy. The courtroom of the post-modern spy is the execution ground for their character. In the moment Butina acknowledges her duplicitous act and enters the plea agreement, her character of ‘Not-a-spy’ is destroyed. In a certain light this would be a representation that has failed.

²⁹⁵ James Boyd White, “Law as Rhetoric, Rhetoric as Law: The Arts of Cultural and Communal Life,” *The University of Chicago Law Review* 52, No. 3 (1985), 684.

²⁹⁶ Julie Stone Peters, “Legal Performance Good and Bad,” *Law, Culture and the Humanities* 4, No. 2 (2008), 181.

In many regards the very nature of court proceedings are non-representational. This is in part due to the fact that court proceedings are at their core a failure of representation. For example, in the court process of reviewing the events that led to charges being laid, such a review in front of a judge always fails to effectively represent what happened in its entirety. Likewise, court proceedings are representations that fail. Like the speech-acts of Austin, the events that occur within the courtroom are performative executions; what transpires is actualized immediately. There is no (or at least there is not supposed to be any) artifice within this event. It is not theatre. As Fuchs might say, events in a courtroom are unavailable for representation. Following this, the signing of the plea-agreement by Butina is a transformative performance moment that is rooted in failure. She was caught, she was accused, she was offered an opportunity, and she agreed. She not only kills the 'operative-character' in the moment she signs the plea agreement, but simultaneously transforms into the character of 'informant'. But this performative transformation leading from failure is not a finalizing moment. It is in possession of qualities that gesture to instances of representation, even if we are determined to ignore them.

The democratic ideal of exposing intelligence-work through the court system is meant to represent the functionality of democracy, defined in part by its transparency. But the idea of transparency is at odds with the clandestine nature of espionage espoused by every national government. The underlying issue is not that the court system is defined by transparency but

rather by a belief in “objective” truth and reality that can be established by evidence and through argumentation. What the success-failure dialectic of espionage indicates is that this belief in objective truth is no more possible than a clear distinction between success and failure in espionage. Bringing espionage into the courtroom and putting it on trial is a recipe that is destined to fail if for no other reason because of all that goes on behind the scenes, and that thus cannot be seen in the court or in a frame that gives a definitive verdict of success or failure. Bearing these ideas in mind, what for example do we call a guilty verdict? Is that a failure because Butina was caught? Or is the guilty verdict a stamp of success because the evidence is itself proof of infiltration and of an agent’s ability to disrupt or to compromise an adversary’s work? And none of this touches upon the extent to which Butina’s work may very well entail embarrassing the US, and hence the trial itself is part of that strategy. Again, this is success on her part and failure on the part of the US.

Yet the disconnected, sometimes shielded, manner through which evidence is presented or arguments are made exposes the court, judiciary, and intelligence services, as opaque institutions—these representations fail and stray into the realm of ironic due to their attempts to depict themselves as transparent while they draw attention to the failure of an infiltrating organization. It is as Bailes writes “failure can be identified through both scripted and non-scripted acts, which is to claim that despite our tendency to believe in its once-off authenticity, the failed moment or event isn’t necessarily improvised, original, *or*, unrepeatable (not always accidental, then) but rather

as susceptible to manipulation as any other outcome.”²⁹⁷ The entire court-proceedings of Butina’s conviction is its own theatrical event of transparency, but is also a performance that is completely nontransparent. Moreover, if we consider the plea-agreement in this light we might begin to suspect that the signing of this document may in fact be its own theatrical event meant to appear as a performance of transformation i.e. the transition from operative to informant.

We might also view the proposal of the plea-agreement by the United States law enforcement agencies as a performative attempt that is, in actuality, theatrical. One that moves through the motions of showing success in capturing a foreign-agent; an agent who in fact is never charged with espionage and who might be offered a plea-agreement to expedite the entire ordeal. This would effectively allow the United States government to push this event into obscurity while the intelligence agencies self-justify their existence and subsequently move forward with further espionage initiatives. When considered through this frame the events in court surrounding Butina are representations that fail—and deliberately I would add. We can also consider this reality in another light. The courtroom and its proceedings are also where there is tactical failure of representation. The deliberate action of the law, judicial system, and intelligence agencies to hide fact is a choice to fail. Seemingly, it serves the desire to perpetuate the system espionage and governmental control.

²⁹⁷ Bailes, *Poetics of Failure*, 5.

The courtroom in which Butina is tried and pleads guilty is clearly not the only place where an agent carries out their work. Thus, there are other locations where the notion of representation and failure must be further explored. For the sake of presenting a balanced perspective let us assume now that the entire enterprise against Butina is in fact as it appears to be and that there was an agent operating in collaboration with the Russian Government who the United States detected, arrested, accused, and convicted through a plea-agreement. If the assertion that Butina was only in a relationship with Erikson to gain access to members of the NRA and Republican Party is true, this would be a representation that fails when such a reality is revealed in the court proceedings. It might even be theorized that in an effort to move up the chain of influence in either of the aforementioned American organizations, Butina would break off the relationship with Erikson to begin a new relationship with someone of more influence. This would arguably be a tactical failure of representation built into the approach to glean information and influence by Butina. Again, this is merely conjecture. But what it does illustrate is that failure of representation can be employed in both intelligence and counterintelligence initiatives. It might even be argued that both the failure of representation and the representation of failure are inherent to espionage. So too is the death of character. This suggests that espionage can be located within the realm of postdramatic or postmodern theatre.

If espionage is post-dramatic or post-modern theatre, then what does this say about the death of character? If we again consider the dialectic on

failure and success, what we are presented with is the following: in each instance in which a character dies it is arguably a moment for when a new character emerges. For example, the character of 'Butina the student' is effectively killed off when she is accused. She instead becomes 'Butina the Russian operative'. Yet, at the same time as alleging that Maria Butina is in fact 'Maria Butina the Russian operative', the United States government casts Butina as the character of 'femme fatale'. Allow me to invert this too. While the United States intelligence services characterize themselves as 'Protectors of Democracy', they simultaneously engage in addressing attacks on democracy in a wholly undemocratic way, instead revealing their character of 'Protectors of Democracy-lite'. The attempt here is to illustrate how characters are created and destroyed in rather rapid succession. Moreover, what is also remarkable is that through such creation and killing of character we are also witness to entities possessing multiple characters at any given instance; much like Mata Hari and her quadruple characters cited earlier. And these are not accidental events. Indeed, the self-justifying systems of espionage would suggest that these are directed and intentional undertakings. This is incredibly similar to how in some postmodern or postdramatic theatre we witness "the motif of self as text."²⁹⁸ Where the character in the performance is able to write themselves into a new reality and identity, effectively rendering the participants in espionage, and even the espionage event itself, as a sort of *tabula rasa*.

²⁹⁸ Fuchs, *Death of Character*, 77.

Tabula Rasa and Character Casting

Espionage effectively has a built-in canvas or empty stage that may place host to the characters of the post-modern performance. To understand how the idea of (re)writing identities and realities functions in relation to espionage it is important to briefly delve into what the *tabula rasa* is, and how it was conceived. The *tabula rasa*, famously addressed by scholars from antiquity to the present day, is a nearly perfect description of both the metaphysical reality that belies espionage, and the more tangible settings and people that both host and participate in the espionage events. We see this in the court-room, where the nearly simultaneous creation and destruction of character occurs; with the people conducting espionage and counter-espionage, who move through characters and who often have their very being playing host to more than one character at a time; and even built into the system of espionage, where the potentiality of failure and success are central to the progression of intelligence affairs. In his essay “Bartleby, or On Contingency” Giorgio Agamben discusses the potential of generative action as he works through the idea of potentiality and the mind, making citation of Aristotle and his notion of *tabula rasa*. As Agamben discusses these concepts he makes note that the ancient-Greek philosopher put forward the position of both ‘potential’ and ‘non-potential’ in his argumentation, much like how Feltham suggests the potential of both failure and success in any given undertaking. Agamben explains it as follows: “[j]ust as the architect retains his potential to build even when he does not actualize it and just as the kithara

player is a kithara player because he can also not play the kithara.”²⁹⁹ So too does espionage possess the quality of potential and ‘non-potential’. This is most certainly the case in respect to character, representation, failure, and success. Each are imbued with a potential that may or may not happen. They are—following both Aristotle and Agamben’s metaphor—like the wax writing tablet “on which nothing is written,” which has the potential to be scrapped and impressed upon, but also reshaped.³⁰⁰ With this idea in mind we can see that Butina, deliberately or not, was both the staging ground and the performer for the post-modern performance of contemporary clandestine work. Her ability to be recast as a new character was both within, and out of, her control, and has even extended to her career post-espionage work. Concerning espionage more broadly, in each instance of character creation we are also witness to the Death of Character, and vice versa. Through such deaths we are able to understand how representations that fail and the failure of representation are both innate and tactical events within clandestine affairs.

Exposing the Dialectic

Espionage exists for itself first and foremost. It operates through a shrewd construction that is able to morph failure into success and success into failure, thus enabling espionage’s continued existence. By linking

²⁹⁹ Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, USA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 245.

³⁰⁰ Agamben, 245.

together issues of success and failure with representation, and by employing a lens of theatre and performance, notably Fuchs theories on post-modern theatre, we can tease apart a dialectic that enables espionage as an undertaking. Moreover, by viewing espionage, trials, executions, and court-proceedings around clandestine affairs through a theatre and performance lens, the opacity of espionage and related government endeavors is rendered slightly more transparent. It is possible to view the exchanges and their artifice, the performative qualities and practices, and the dramatic stakes that imbue acts of espionage and charges of espionage. Furthermore, a theatre and performance understanding allows us to glimpse the motivations of espionage. We are able to understand it as the theatrical plague that it is, threatening a conflagration of not only the society being infiltrated, but of the society undertaking the infiltration.

As I suggested earlier, what threatens phenomena like espionage most is the exposure of the system of self-preservation and self-justification. Theatre and performance allow us to do that. Moreover, with the understanding that espionage and its undertakers often engage in methods of work that are undemocratic, theatre and performance analysis can act as a vanguard against the avant-garde. The one remaining issue harkens back to the introduction, which proposes that if we think of theatre and performance through Althusser's ideas on State Apparatus, then we must be careful to identify that theatre and performance, as cultural endeavors, often fulfill the role of Ideological State Apparatus. With espionage, theatre and performance

straddle the line between ISA and RSA, while simultaneously offering us a door in to understand these issues better.

Conclusion - Suspicion and Espionage in the 21st Century

Of all the case-studies reviewed in this project, the actions of James Jesus Angleton and Maria Butina, as well as the activities of Huawei, might be the most illustrative of the challenges of contemporary espionage and the direction these practices might be heading in. With this research project having identified the relationship between espionage, and theatre and performance, the necessary next step would be to identify which direction theatre and performance research might head in to address contemporary issues in depth. The narrative of Angleton's molehunt presents an intriguing instance to research another aspect of espionage, namely the notion of *suspicion*. Angleton's paranoia developed out of his obsession with understanding instances of falsity within the CIA. Harkening back to the ideas explored in chapter three, the principle at stake is that what seems to be truthful is in fact untruthful. If we recall, so strong was Angleton's belief that the CIA had a mole within it that he suspected no less than forty senior officers, and seriously investigated a minimum of fourteen. Additionally, Angleton's beliefs on who could be trusted were so conflicted, and his reliance on Golitsyn so great, that "Angleton's suspicions of other Soviet defectors, all of whom Golitsyn proclaimed to be fakes designed to distract the CIA from his revelations, led to underutilization of their information, or worse."³⁰¹ What is identifiable in this passage is that suspicion, whether

³⁰¹ Richelson, *A Century of Spies*, 290.

warranted or not, has a clear ability to disrupt. Angleton's suspicion hindered his performance as a senior CIA officer. Moreover, it stymied the efforts of the CIA on whole.

The reason behind how suspicion manifests as a phenomenon could be analyzed from a myriad of positions. However, keeping the focus on the role of espionage, and looking back to the ideas of deception, truth, and secrets, what might be concluded is that suspicion is a state preceding the acceptance of something as completely truthful. A belief by an individual that they are being deceived and that which appears to be truthful is in fact untruthful. As was noted in chapter one, Thomas Carson suggests that "in order for there to be deception it is necessary that the deceiver believes what she causes the other person(s) to believe is false."³⁰² With suspicion, the individual who would otherwise believe that which is false, no longer holds this belief. Instead they are put in a position where they discount the truthfulness of the intended deception, or even discount instances of truth. This could be aligned with Sissela Bok's position on lying, which proposes that deceit and violence are "two forms of deliberate assault on human beings."³⁰³ We might then suggest that suspicion is a moment hesitancy aiding in the prevention of being assaulted. Bok, in fact, alludes to this later when working through the perspective of the deceived individual. She

³⁰² Carson, *Lying and Deception*, 48.

³⁰³ Sissela Bok, *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life* (New York, USA: Pantheon Books, 1978), 18.

suggests not only that someone who is deceived feels wronged because they have been denied agency, but that they are also consequently “resentful, disappointed and suspicious” and remain wary of future instances in which they may be deceived and thus again assaulted.³⁰⁴ Suspicion, in other words, is at times a result of an individual being made aware that they were previously a recipient of deceitful behavior. This then might be extended to a theatre and performance paradigm.

In principle, in most theatre we are engaged with instances of staged deception that we consent to. Watching a theatre production, the audience is fully aware that the performance is not real but chooses to willingly suspend their disbelief. Moreover, and aligning with Carson’s perspective, no performer (the deceiver in this analogy) believes what the audience is seeing and hearing, to be false, while the audience believes it to be true. Yet, theatricality is arguably at the heart of deception. Indeed, not only did Plato banished the poets from his republic because the arts inaccurately replicate nature, but that by extension the arts in their replicable abilities could also be used to falsely represent and deceive, as well as instruct and promote problematic ideas. In Boal’s Invisible Theatre the audience, or spect-actors as Boal identifies them, are unaware that a performance is taking place. The performers willingly present their performance with the full awareness that the audience believes that what they are seeing is true, when the performers know it to be false. This is a deception. But what is happening in these

³⁰⁴ Bok, 20.

instances is two-fold. Firstly, and in line with Bok's position, this deceptive form of theatre willingly assaults the spect-actors. However, and secondly, this assault is acknowledged afterwards to aid in the instructional process that typically follows performances of Invisible Theatre. The desire is for the audience members to reflect on their willingness to standby in these moments of social dynamism. Bearing this in mind, some might argue that those engaging in Invisible Theatre hope for instances in the future, when a similarly dynamic social injustice is taking place, that the audience will recall their previous experience, watch the new event with suspicion, and ultimately recall their previous lack of intervention and involve themselves in the next instance. In this, suspicion is capitalized on in an effort to facilitate social change through theatre. Other instances exist within theatre and performance as well.

Within performance studies we might look to suspicion as a moment of poor reception for a performative. That while the performative is enacted, those witnessing do not receive or recognize the intention of those executing the act. Similarly, we might extend the idea of suspicion to Goffman's work on the presentation of self or the con artist. That those presentations that stray from the realm of normalcy are perceived with suspicion. As Allison Scott-Baumann identifies in *Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion* the principles of suspicion are tied to doubt. She provides a succinct definition of the term and proposes that suspicion is "generally used to refer to doubt

about the motives of others.”³⁰⁵ Revisiting Austin’s performative utterances, we might consider the moment a bride says, ‘I do’ to be false. That she does not agree to love and to cherish. Or in the case of Goffman, we might doubt the presentation of the con man, believing that we are at risk of being assaulted by his deceptive performance. Thinking through Schechner’s position on the transformative and transportative qualities of rituals also shows how suspicion might disrupt the ritual. Doubt towards the sincerity of the ritual, for example that a child participating in a religious coming of age ceremony does not possess a particularly strong conviction towards their religion, would hinder the transportative (and potentially even transformative) qualities of the enactment. Like with Angleton, suspicion hinders the execution of the theatrical and/or performative event. This might then be brought back to espionage of the 21st century.

As identified in chapter three, the company Huawei has increasingly found itself at odds with the governments of western nations. The primary charge made against the company is that the infrastructure that Huawei will help build and run does not exclusively operate for use by the public. That it simultaneously acts, or could act, as a vessel for Chinese government espionage efforts. The suspicion cast upon Huawei renders its efforts to expand its business futile. Moreover, if the Chinese government is indeed using this digital infrastructure to conduct espionage, then suspicion hinders

³⁰⁵ Alison Scott-Baumann, *Ricoeur and the Hermeneutics of Suspicion* (London, UK: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2009), 7.

this initiative as well. The issue of suspicion is not only at play within digital espionage, but also more traditional analogue efforts. Maria Butina, like Huawei, was caught out in part due to suspicion towards her work in the United States. While her efforts were allegedly meant to bridge gun rights groups within the United States and Russia, the doubt cast by American intelligence services facilitated the charges laid against her, as well as her arrest, trial, and eventual deportation. What is particularly interesting about the Butina case is that formal parameters exist in the United States to avoid coming under suspicion. If Butina had followed the proper protocols of registering as an agent of a foreign nation, effectively performing the role of law-abiding foreigner, would she then have moved more freely and been suspected less? To put it another way, does normalcy inhibit suspicion? An investigation into suspicion could attempt to address these ideas.

As the lines between corporations, nations, and their espionage efforts become blurred, and as corporations continue to siphon data from customers at an increasing rate, the issues of ulterior motives, deception, and untruth are given more fertile ground. By many accounts the public had already become attuned to these concerns and affected by them. This might be because the previously noted instances of deception are assaults on the populace—if considered in-line with Bok’s theorizations on lying. It is easily intuited that expressions of suspicion by members of the populace have become more pronounced and entrenched in recent years. It may be this very reason that society has seen an increase in conspiracy theories and deep

distrust for government institutions. These individuals doubt what is being shown and communicated to the public. That the information is not truthful and is in fact deceptive.

What then does this mean for espionage? In many respects the developments in espionage, as traced from Angleton, to Butina, to Huawei, show that the traditional spy is being rendered obsolete. What need is there for a person to be physically present when information can be gleaned via networks, servers, and digital infrastructure. It might even be suggested that the very concept of espionage has so radically changed that it is difficult to identify. To quote former NSA employee Joel Brenner again “your spy’s job is no longer stealing information but planting malicious software from the inside to enable a remote cyberthief to snatch information later.”³⁰⁶ This is done in an insidious manner. By being built into the very systems that are required for information sharing, we might liken contemporary espionage to being closer to biological warfare. That it is meant to spread virally, affect large groups of people at once, and is often meant to incapacitate. Historically speaking, this is not out of the realm of ordinary. If we recall the mandate of the SOE set by Winston Churchill, that the organization was meant to “set Europe ablaze”, we can see that espionage is meant as intervention. In the digital era, the facilitation of espionage through networks and servers allows interventionist activity to occur much more easily. But instead of stealing information these networks of espionage allow for the dissemination of false information,

³⁰⁶ Brenner, *America the Vulnerable*, 52.

scandal, polarizing politics, and more. These campaigns are meant to cause disruption so that those conducting espionage gain the upper hand in the conflict/competition. Furthermore, when we think of Butina-like espionage, and if we believe what Butina says to be true, then we find ourselves investigating a form of espionage that is undertaken by amateurs or in amateurish ways. What this all points to is that 21st century espionage begins to look like large-scale disembodied intervention that is conducted at a distance via networks that utilize intel gleaned from users. This type of espionage is found in the disinformation campaigns that seem to be so prevalent in recent years, such as the 2016 United States election and the Brexit vote, and even the global vaccine campaign against COVID-19. In these instances, espionage was, and is, used to develop and spread suspicion. Suspicion of other races, nations, sexes, genders, classes, and more. The challenge is in identifying where efforts to engage in espionage, and where the generation points of suspicion, begin and end. What should be evident is that doubt and suspicion are a rich area of investigation that utilizes the research within this project as a departure point, especially regarding espionage practices of the 21st century.

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