

Paranoia and Agency in Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*

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Abstract

*This article argues that Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* fictionalizes generated paranoia and the loss of agency and individuality due to being watched constantly during the Cold War. The novel challenges the suspension of democratic rights during the period and the use propaganda as a tool for social control. It exposes the propaganda used during the Cold War and its influence on the creation of docile bodies through institutions. Moreover, this article argues that Spark not only questions the totalitarianism of the Communist Soviet Union, but she also castigates infringement of civil and democratic rights under surveillance in the UK during the period. It shows how the novel uses fiction and propagandist techniques, such as black propaganda, to counteract forces of state power and defy the generated paranoia.*

I. Introduction

This article explores Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961) in the socio-political context of the Cold War period. It explores the ways Spark employs propagandist techniques to promote democracy, freedom and agency under the paranoid-driven culture of the Cold War. It reveals how the constant surveillance and propaganda in the UK during the period generated a dystopian impulse in storytelling. Moreover, it contends the novel is a representative of the type of fiction that that actively participated in promotion of individual freedom and agency as well as democratic rights to resist the authoritarian practices of censorship during the period in the UK.

The complication begins with defining paranoia and agency that ranges from a narrow daily life use of the word to broad academic conceptions and clinical uses. There are plethora of debates surrounding what could paranoia mean, but when it comes to reading fiction there is one common idea that Lewis defines as "the threat of total engulfment by somebody else's system, is keenly felt by many of the dramatis personae of postmodernist fictions" (2011, p. 176). Samuel Coal repeats the idea that "the cultural status of paranoia also, appears to be very real when fictional characters reveal their conspiratorial anxieties and fears" (2004, p. 6). These conspiratorial fantasies of paranoia

are associated with the ambience of global politics. As Lewis argues, "it is tempting to speculate that this began as an indirect mimetic representation of the climate of fear and suspicion that prevailed throughout the Cold War" (2011, p. 176). Lewis' definition lacks a component that leads to another strand that is agency.

Anthony Giddens and Phillip W. Sutton describe agency along with social structures as a problematic dichotomy since agency is often attributed to the source of the social change operation that assumes an individual who is prevented from freedom. What makes changes in the history has a self-reflexive consequence and the problem of agency remains debatable. As they conclude, "it seems unlikely that the problem of structure and agency will ever be resolved to everyone's satisfaction" (Giddens & Sutton, 2014, p. 57). In terms of literary interpretation, agency manifests itself in a series of identity issues of authorship and readership. As Arya Aryan puts it, agency "is a sense of controlling one's own thoughts, feelings and emotions" (2020, p. 123). He also argues that, "our sense of self-consciousness works with regards to both that subjectivity and agency which also make up authorship" (Aryan, 2021, p. 112). Loss of agency coincides with the rise of postmodernism, as Samuel Coale argues, in postmodernism "reality and the self-become provisional, contingent, and uncertain. The Deification of the Western rational self-bites the dust. There are no authorities, no origins, no logos, no center. Everything becomes relational: signs signifiers, signifies and images can only define on another by being different from each other" (2004, p. 3). As Aryan puts it, "[p]ostmodernist representation suggests that reality exists but that we know it only through representations" (Aryan, 2022, p. 10) and that "[m]etafiction, as a (or the) major postmodernist form of art, marks the problematisation of the representation of reality" (p. 14). Paranoia and loss of agency are often aspects of postmodern fiction that questions grand narratives by calling into question the representation of reality.

There are intimate correlations between paranoia and the postmodern novel during the Cold War. Coale, who associates paranoia and conspiracy to postmodern fiction, shows the connection between fiction and loss of agency that "conspiracy locates the individual at the center of a massive but ominously anonymous master plot or scheme that is solely beyond one's control thus reproducing the existence of bottomless interpretation and ultimate insolubility that haunts the postmodern experience and point of view" (2004, p. 6). Moreover, there are other labels and perspectives that date this radical skepticism to earlier times of the Nuclear War. According to Adam Piette, who considers the global wars a direct cause of the postmodern skepticism, "postmodernity was created in the military godhead's flash across Japanese skies in 1945. It gave postmodernity its nihilistic model for the destroying of all past logic, measure, and grand narrative" (2012, p. 161).

Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* is inseparable part of the Cold War discourse. Its narrative demonstrates a disruption and challenge to the order of the disciplinarian authority's discourse. Giddens and Suttons define discourse as "speech or written communication such as that involved in face-to-face conversation, public debates, online chatrooms, and so on" (2014, p. 14). Moreover, Michel Foucault has a slightly different notion of the discourse which is central to the discourse analysis of power which this this. Foucault does not think the discourse is a reflection of any other social relations, but it is the speech act itself that power is embedded in. According to

Foucault, "in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized, and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality" (1981, p. 52). Spark's novel as a discourse operates a response to the dominant institute's narrative.

The paper argues that *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* is a self-aware narrative that employs black propaganda techniques for creating believable fiction. Spark uses these methods as a political and ethical countermeasure against authoritarian thought, making reality appear open to change and democratic discussion. The novel features unreliable narrators, such as Sandy Stranger, who fabricates Miss Brodie's story similarly to a black propagandist. While Miss Jean Brodie appears to support fascism, she is actually criticizing it and causing more damage to the ideology, thus functioning as a black propagandist. Spark, having worked as a PWE propagandist, recognized the dangers of the Cold War discourse and implemented the same black propaganda techniques in her writing to counteract authoritarian regimes and promote democracy. The next part delves into the narrative of accusations and pinpoints Sandy Stranger as a satirical figure who represents institutions of authorship that interprets others and justifies them through re-writing their biography within the school institution. Furthermore, this section interprets Sandy as a complex figure that registers the discourse of psychiatry, religious and education and justifies the institutional judgments. The novel criticizes how institutions force suppresses freedom of expression and defies institutional power through employing propagandist narrative techniques.

Paranoia and Surveillance during the Cold War

The Cold War commonly refers to periodization of passive yet dangerous times where humanity was on the brink of total annihilation with nuclear weapons. Cold War, if periodized, is arguably continuation of the successive First and Second World War residues, but the symptoms of this anxiety emerged during 1946-1947 with the rise of tensions between Soviet Union and United States. Hanes and Hanes periodized between 1945 to 1991 and define it as "a war of differing systems of government, of mutual fear and distrust, did not begin like conventional wars, with guns blazing. The Cold War began on the heels of World War II" (2004, p.1). According to Medovoi "the most comprehensive framework for understanding the complexities of the Cold War era has been right under our nose, in the discourses and practices of war itself" (2012, p. 163). Medovoi is referring to a specific discourse that is commonly signified as the containment culture where symptoms of paranoid self under surveillance emerged where the discourse itself echoes a story of espionage. In Foucauldian terms, surveillance as a mechanic of power through policy making turns the docile bodies into institutional utility (1995, p. 138). In other words, the policy making formulates a military organization out of ordinary citizens to both preserve internal dynamic of the discourse and watching the deviations from it. Moreover, examining the discourse of Cold War is a necessary pathway to grasp the historical context of textual production in which Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* was written.

Historically, the zeitgeist of a new apocalypse was born into the metanarratives that assured both uncertainty and unsafety from total annihilation. During the Cold War period, the world witnesses intricate intertwining of proxy wars, espionage, diplomatic

maneuvering and propaganda campaigns. Although the Cold War has been declared a closed chapter in history, much of its cultural play and repercussions still requires scholarly inquiry and evaluation. Because of the types of primary sources on which scholars rely, the available literature on the Cold War favors diplomatic, military and political history.

In *The Other Cold War* (2010), Heonik Kwon points out that for European and North American nations the Cold War era meant a "long peace" whereas for many new post-colonial nations elsewhere the arrival of the Cold War was synonymous with a period of "unbridled reality" characterized by brutal civil wars and other uncommon forms of political violence (2010, p. 6).

The containment strategy of UK-US ostensible goal was to restrict the spread of a totalitarian ideology of the Soviet Union and in support of freedom and liberty, it was gliding and deteriorating progressively totalitarian, creating a culture where dissenting opinions were not tolerated but censored. The threat and paranoid opinion were already shown and put into words by George F. Kennan, an article published as "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" and recognized by "X Article" that further reached Harry Truman's administration. Anxiety of those writings influenced the dominant policy of the time during Truman's and Eisenhower's presidential administrations. Kennan's publications and ideas helped to shape what became recognized as the "Truman Doctrine" (1947), a foreign policy designed to keep the Soviet Union from attempting to spread its ideological impact (Aryan, 2020, p. 150). This conflict was in its heightened military mobilization, violent propaganda, and intense global competition and proxy battles to avoid a direct conflict with another superpower. Although neither superpower deployed military weapons or armed forces against the other adversary, this was a state-initiated disagreement that put nations on a war footing and engaged a massive arms setup and military preparations, and it affected USA and UK also other involved countries in terms of suppression of democracy (Merritt & Curhoys, 1984, p. 1).

When a democratic state integrates propaganda, it risks the individual freedom of expression in it and begins to repress the opposition with paranoia. Paranoia was intensified from this condition of propaganda when the individual recognizes the sense of engulfment that controls and channels his imagination that is not his own nor can verify his suspicion. Propaganda does not only promote what is known, but rather it creates illusions and fabricates fantasies of true meta-narratives as well. The paranoia accelerated with the television's common sense that appeared as a true friend that could numb its viewers with its delicious images from the culture industry that magnified and reinforced sex, money, and power and at the same time condemn ideas and lifestyles. If not eliminated they were put under surveillance and blacklisted to minimize their disruption as much as possible. Moreover, blacklisting actors, directors, journalists and authors where available strategy the accompanied Cold War propaganda. In connection with this is the FBI's expansion of influence and surveillance in artistic and literary productions which William Maxwell refers to as "Total Literary Awareness" (2012, p. 23). As Aryan argues, "[i]ronically, the Cold War discourse—the containment culture—whose alleged aim was anti-totalitarian in defence of human freedom, was or became, increasingly autocratic as it created a similar condition in which the voices of dissent

were dehumanized" (2020, p. 152). In other words, the democratic state that uses propaganda and surveillance turns its ideal dreams into an apocalypse of paranoia.

Cold War is the global that war never took place in the battlefields between USSR and United States but it was a war on imagination that television and media bombarded them. The fighting primarily takes the form of political maneuvering that led to suspension of democracy and lack of freedom because it caused many people to lose their jobs, end up in prison or be considered as spies, books were banned, writers, actors were fired and eventually it imprisoned the social communications. Beside the configuration of the technological warfare that could instantly erase population on earth, the threatening sense of erosion of democracy deteriorating to totalitarianism due to discourse surveillance that could be ranged from uncooperative to propaganda and defamation to prison and physical punishment if it was necessary. The United States and United Kingdom began to internalize the military conflict through training docile bodies to police the discourse and watch over suspicious activities.

The Cold War in the UK

Policy making was not only an internal affair within the United States, but it had extended its reach to international partnership in foreign affairs especially the United Kingdom that practiced similar policies against shared interest against common enemy. Although Cold War unrest is commonly perceived between two superpowers of US and USSR, but Britain was also immensely involved against Soviet Union and its practice of surveillance had been already put into effect prior to 1940s. Although containment culture as a state tactic, not as policy, is understood widely as purely American phenomenon, but according to Erik Goldstein, containment in Britain can be dated back to nineteenth century where intermittently the antagonism between Russia and Britain were invoked before and after first World War and Bolshevik schools of revolutions (2003, pp. 7-8). The interest of Britain in this rivalry against communist ideology was against the threats on European Continent and the Western Discourse. Moreover, in response to the USSR threats on European land, three consecutive treaties that started with the leading figure Ernest Bevin who was British Foreign Secretary's policy in 1947 from grouping European security, Brussels treatise in 1948 to the NATO in 1949 treatise established a concrete policy against military and ideological threats on Europe.

The development of the policy in Britain grew suspicion among people generated a paranoid atmosphere through institutionally regulating and justifying both national propaganda and surveillance as well as necessary responses to transgression and subversive activities of textual production against communist conspiracies.

The Cold War's textual production and stories explore how it would be to live under the threat and anxiety of restriction and prohibitions, and the fear of being constantly watched and spied on. Many authors express this fear and paranoia as well as the subsequent suspension of freedom and individual agency in their works. The early poetry of Auden group, which was a group of Irish and British authors of 1930s including Cecil Day-Lewis, Stephen Spender and Wystan Hugh Auden is replete with references to spies and espionage, to the point where the themes of spying have been debated as one of Auden's fascinations, and the attraction of this world was clear. However, these writers are not Cold War writers but first World War hence the fear of being spied on and threat of censorship had been seeded since first World War and continued during the

Cold War, too. When English novelist, journalist and political activist Ralph Bates arrived in the British port of Newhaven in 1936, the writings he was carrying were thoroughly checked by police, and authorities went further by sending secret intelligence agency of MI5 a list of the chapter headings in his unpublished manuscript and making sure that Spain is not mentioned in his stories in other words to censor and make sure the story and manuscripts doesn't include any political issues.

The British Secret Service Bureau was founded in 1909. Its aim was to investigate and combat the wave of German espionage that was feared to be engulfing Britain. Then it gave birth to two significant services such as MI5 and the Secret Intelligence Service or MI6. MI6 is in charge of gathering intelligence outside British territory; MI5 is in charge of counter-subversion in the United Kingdom and the colonies; the Special Branch is tasked with assisting MI5 through the investigation and arrest of suspects (Smith, 2013, pp. 8-10). Clearly MI5 and MI6 activities were result of the fear of the spread of communism, totalitarianism and its consequences exceeded including espionage activities to control information and singling out abnormal individual as suspects of disconformity. This is based on perception of what national security requirements for normal citizens that are threatened by abnormal intrusion.

Towards the 1930s, MI5 had established a system of surveillance, assessment, and filing that would serve as the foundation for procedures for decades to come. Whereas the idea of somebody being under surveillance stirs up either paranoid or romanticized images, MI5 officers obtained some of their information through methods commonly associated with covert spy craft. The monitoring section kept a team following key suspects and informing them of their activities and contact information. Charles Henry Maxwell Knight, well known by Maxwell Knight, was a British spymaster, naturalist, and broadcaster. He was a key figure in the surveillance of both an early British Fascist party and the main Communist Party. Maxwell Knight's division ran agent networks to infiltrate specific target organizations like the Communist Party of the Great Britain (CPGB). Due to technological advancement over the years, the information of inbound and outbound calls could be monitored, and covert bugs installed in the CPGB headquarters made most of the discussions taking place in the Party's inner sanctum obtainable to MI5. MI5 arranged secret raids on private homes and businesses to collect information at other times (Smith, 2012, p. 11). MI5's purpose was not to review regular biographies or collect infinite documentation but instead to effectively monitor, filter and categorize massive information flow to determine if any individual in Britain was engaged with any specific organizations, whether visiting particular addresses, parties, publications, political events or security-flagged individuals which might suggest they might be a potential subversive or spy. Because MI5 was an advisory instead of an executive agency, the records managed to gather were used to notify the activities of a variety of other federal agencies.

Smith explicates that MI5 frequently obtained copies of scholarly journals like Left Review and International Literature, noting contributors, editors, financiers and shippers' names as possible security risks. Postal checks revealed names of left-wing journalists and those taking an interest in cultural activities such as literary works and theater who were actively participating in meetings, conferences as well as the identities of the authors who corresponded with suspicious publishers or organizations while MI6 relayed

information from its origins about international developments involving anarchist and abnormal writers (Smith, 2013, p. 16). MI5 agents organized joint movie screenings with the presumably impartial British Board of Film Classification (BBFC), permitting them to evaluate the content of the latest propaganda films and collaborates methods of handling any films presumed to challenge a significant risk with the BBFC. Whereas the lacking nuance and frequently missing publications that literary historians would consider pivotal to the era MI5 nevertheless developed a simple system for tracing writers and cultural productions, allowing officers to assess the political standing of given writers and contextual works and Permitting officers to evaluate the political prospects of an assigned writer or recommend whether a particular organization was assumed to be under Comintern influence.

Originally, the term "propaganda" was associated with spreading the Christian faith. Pope Gregory XV 1622 coined the term to refer to the congregio de propaganda, a Roman curia organization with jurisdiction over Christian missionaries' territories. The congregation's mission's purpose was to win back the countries lost to the Church in the sixteenth-century debacle through "spiritual arms, prayer work, preaching and catechizing" (Jackall, 1995, p. 1).

In this context propaganda meant to be described as persuasion, evangelizing, or education. Although the term propaganda first appeared in the sixteenth century, it was not broadly used until the early twentieth century. From mass market magazines in the 1880s to film in 1895, radio in the 1930s, and television in the 1950s, the development of various mass media provided access to an ever-increasing audience for mass persuasion. Alfred Lee agrees that propaganda involves persuasion but adds additional conditions that limit its scope. He clarifies propaganda as "an expression overtly set forth or covertly implied in order to influence the attitudes and through the attitudes, the opinions and action of a public" (1953, p. 18). However, this is more than just persuasion; it also includes the condition that the target of the persuasion is the general public. The word propaganda was used by the Allies during the First and Second World Wars and described only the enemy point of view forming activities as propaganda however, these enemy activities mostly poised of lies. These practices made a strong description for the word propaganda as strongly negative implications. In the literature on propaganda some authors try to naturalize the word neutral usage. Hence, these negative connotations are so firmly ingrained, and the term propaganda is emotionally charged with negative connotations, that it is commonly used as a verbal weapon to challenge the viewpoints or arguments one opposes or wishes to demonize as not being rationally convincing in result "[t]hese strong negative connotations attached to the word propaganda imply that such discourse is both unethical and illogical, The ethical aspect implies intentional deception and manipulation of a mass audience" (Walton, 1997, p. 384).

Smith defines propaganda "most basically as any presentation of information designed to sway a recipient to a certain viewpoint" (2013, p. 23). Britain's most well-known wartime propaganda agency such as the Ministry of Information (MOI), since mid-1930s, was responsible for a wide range of functions, including control of information and press restrictions in the United Kingdom, broadcast policy to affiliated and neutral countries and domestic publicity and information in the form of movies, broadcasts,

journals, books, artworks and booklets designed to improve motivation (Smith, 2013, p. 24). Although the MOI captured the public's attention in Britain by controlling information and press censorship, several other more delicate and more sensitive agencies were involved in Britain's propaganda campaign. organizations such as Electra House (commonly known as Department EH), a Foreign Office department involved in activities such as pamphlet drops into Germany throughout the early years of the Second World War. These were the agencies that carried out grey and black propaganda, composing material depends on deformations and making it appear to come from an unidentified or third-party source "grey propaganda tended to be anonymous, black propaganda tended to be faked" (Smith, 2013, p. 25). Propaganda can be classified to three categories white, black and grey. White propaganda is based on facts and truth hence showing some parts of the facts and not concentrating on other sides according to its goal. The British Government's policy has always been for its white propaganda to be backed up by facts, not essentially the whole facts, but that never lied on purpose. White propaganda included the British Broadcasting Corporation's foreign language broadcasts to Europe and the millions of leaflets dropped by Royal Air Force aircraft; both the broadcasts and leaflets clearly stated where they came from and what they were for in terms of its purposes. On the other hand, black propaganda is information disseminated by an opposing government or institution disguised as coming from a reliable source.

Moreover, black propaganda is narrated in a way that can be the most believable and persuading hence it is fake information mixed with some facts. Black propaganda claimed or led the audience to assume, it to be something it was not. Christian Mull and Mathew Wallin define black propaganda as "[b]lack propaganda is falsely attributed to a source other than the true originator. It also describes the use of disinformation which spreads false information as truth to an audience with intent that the audience does not realize it is being propagandized" (Smith, 2013, p. 3). Black propaganda was permitted to deceive and lie on the contrary, "just as the best white propaganda is based on the truth, so the same applies for black. It is often the truth or partial truth in a more palatable form" (Richards, 2010, p. 3).

Beatriz Lopez describes the Political Warfare Executive PWE as "secret service created by Britain during the Second World War with the mission of spreading propaganda to enemy and enemy occupied countries" (2020, p. 969). The PWE was in control of creating black propaganda, evidence of disputable credibility originating from an unidentified or falsely credited authority. PWE later and most successfully managed the British secret propaganda campaign. The PWE was launched in 1941 a clandestine organization that produced and disseminated black and white propaganda. The PWE orchestrated BBC broadcasts into surrounding countries. The broadcasts were widely accessed even though listening to them was forbidden by the Nazis. During Second World War They also conducted black propaganda operations ranging from faked German radio programs to disinformation booklets thrown from the airplane into occupied Europe.

Propaganda and Agency in Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*

Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961) is a self-conscious and paranoid narrative aware of its art of surveillance. Lopez discusses how Muriel Spark uses

techniques similar to those in WWII black propaganda to create believable fiction in her novels by incorporating elements such as "deployment of verifiable facts, evidence, precise information, appropriate tone, narrative coherence, targeting, covert motives, chronological disruption, and repetition to construct the key elements of fiction in her novels" (2020, p. 971). She contends that these literary techniques serve as a political and ethical countermeasure against authoritarian thought by depicting reality as inherently subject to change and, as a result, open to outside challenges and democratic discussion. In the novel, Spark makes unreliable voices, as Sandy Stranger, who rewrites Miss Brodie's biography, seem like a black propagandist who fabricates Brodie's story. As David Lodge argues "the key here is the character Sandy Stranger, Shrewdest, the most complex and the most interesting of Brodie, who is also the principal point of view character in the novel. Not only do we see most of the action from her eyes, but many of the authorial comments are in effect comment on Sandy and her perception" (1971, p. 127).

Moreover, Spark shapes Miss Jean Brodie as a protagonist and a likable character seemingly supporting fascism. However, in the fashion of black propaganda, her words and actions do more damage to, instead of supporting, fascism. In other words, what separates white propaganda from black propaganda is that white propaganda directly attacks to promote an ideology (Richards, 2010, p. 3). On the other hand, black propaganda style looks as if it is supporting an ideology but in reality it is a critique of that ideology, hence the outcome is more damage and criticism to the ideology. Similarly, Miss Jean Brodie functions as a black propagandist. Muriel Spark, once a black propagandist for the PWE, recognized the perils posed by the restrictive nature of the Cold War. In response to the use of black propaganda by the United States and the UK, she identified methods to counteract authoritarian regimes. Spark observed the absence of democracy and the curtailment of freedoms in the Soviet Union, the UK, and the USA. Consequently, she incorporated into her fiction the same tactics she employed as a black propagandist in her writing for the PWE as exemplified and articulated through Miss Jean Brodie.

Much of the background of Muriel Spark is mystified or unreliable to the extent that her biographer, despite her vocation as a journalist, says "her reputation was that of recluse: a mysterious figure whose biographical file was anorexic" (Stannard, 2010, p. xv). Moreover, there is an uncertainty about Spark's reclusive nature that she kept vague and uncertain from the public. According to Aryan, Muriel Spark had been concerned with two major issues of authorship and women liberation during the Cold War, along with Sylvia Plath and Doris Lessing (2020, p. 112). In other words, Spark's novels were responses to the authoritarian forces that attempted to restrict individual agency through storytelling. Spark described how she prepared a list defining the characteristics of her characters to assist her in developing their personalities in her novels. Her fiction becomes the site of espionage self-conviction to how the discourse of power imprisoned the public like psychoanalytic personality interpreting the conspiracies around them due to loss of agency and rise of institutionalization. It echoes the paranoia of fabrication and deception of storytelling and at the same time it resonates critical views about how the social relations increasingly become a carceral apparatus for the discourse of power over madness. It is about a teacher, Jean Brodie, who is dedicating her career to educate girl

students at Marcia Blaine School in Edinburgh. She has both institutional and private relationship with them to take care of a group of six girls who stand out, known as "Brodie set," including Monica Douglas, Rose Stanley, Eunice Gardiner, Sandy Stranger, Jenny Gray, Mary Macgregor. However, Miss Jean Brodie is forced to retire for accusation raised by her own students regarding her support and promotions of fascism. In the novel, Spark employs the same rhetoric of black propaganda of the Cold War and the anxiety of storytelling.

The novel remains either to be read as a story of Jean Brodie who seems to support fascism to discredit the ideology and she is betrayed by her students or a paranoid author Sandy Stranger who is fabricating stories about Brodie. This paranoid and deceiving style of fiction resembles the rhetoric of the Cold War and its propaganda of fabricating stories. As Aryan argues, "paranoid delusions and the fear of losing authorial agency, which are the outcome of the disappearance or death of the author in wider post-High Theory British and US culture, are a significant source of artistic creativity as the writer projects these semi-paranoid delusions, fears, and anxieties into characters and stories" (Aryan, 2023, p. 339). The plot is the art of deceptive rhetoric of the Cold War surveillance between Sandy Stranger and Miss Jean Brodie. The verbal struggle between the characters shapes the way they are identified rather than having permanent identities that Brodie the teacher is not committing any act of treason in any obvious sense, nor this is the case of any of the Brodie Sets, but they assess each other suspiciously based on how they narrate the events and fabricate fiction with the influence of political context. Thus, the novel is a warning about how dangerous interpretation is and at the same time how propaganda works in rhetoric of romanticizing stories.

In the beginning, Miss Brodie tells a story to the students about her ideal romance with Hugh who dies in the war. Spark exposes the fictionality of the stories by disrupting the chronology of the narrative especially her account of Hugh. Moreover, the story is disrupted by two other accounts, that of Mary McGregor and Rose Stanley. Rose becomes famous for sex and Mary dies at 23 in a hotel, these disruptions keep going during the novel and it causes the reader to be interrupted from the story.

The following passage about two main characters Jenny and Sandy in the novel is a deliberate disruption of the reader since subsequently the narrator does not return to this episode and therefore it is a hidden possibility in all things left to the reader reflecting on it rather than a theme of sexual discovery:

"I feel I'm past it," said Jenny. This was strangely true, and she did not again experience her early sense of erotic wonder in life until suddenly one day when she was nearly forty, an actress of moderate reputation married to a theatrical manager. It happened she was standing with a man whom she did not know very well outside a famous building in Rome, waiting for the rain to stop. She was surprised by a reawakening of that same buoyant and airy discovery of sex; a total sensation which it was impossible to say was physical or mental, only that it contained the lost and guileless delight of her eleventh year. (Spark, 1984, p. 85)

Spark is using the technique of black propaganda in her novel and for the same reason she uses flashback and flash forwards as example in the beginning of the novel the reader is informed that Brodie had been betrayed which is explained later on in the novel with its reasons for the betrayal. Moreover, the story evolves into complicated details of Brodie and Hugh's romantic story which remain unresolved. The story of Hugh

is believed in the first part within the school as it is told by Jean Brodie that Hugh dies. However, Sandy and Jenny rewrite the story differently that Hugh never died in the war and a telegram was received which shows he is alive (Spark, 1984, p. 24). A third account is also available as Sandy reaches a totally different conclusion that it is a metaphorical code used by Brodie to his secret another co-working teacher who seems to have an affair with her. On one occasion Monica Douglas mentions that she saw Miss Brodie and the art teacher Mr. Lloyd kissing. Sandy investigates her to observe every single detail of the situation as "when? Where?" how ... did they kiss, as Spark narrates that Sandy started "the role of cross-examiner" (Spark, 1984, pp. 52-53). Also, as the narrator in many conversations, Sandy tells the reader that Mr. Lloyd is portraying the girls as Sandy and Rose but all of his portraits look like Miss Brodie, as she states, "the portrait was very like Miss Brodie" (Spark, 1984, p. 105). Consequently, the narrative at these interpretations ends with parallel and possible meanings about Brodie and leaves the reader baffled, questioning what the signifier of Hugh in the book is which is a postmodern technique to reject singular meaning in position and oppose propaganda.

The narrative arouses suspicion as to the authenticity of each account and consequently suspends the judgment through manipulating the omniscient voice of the narrator and turning it into a paranoid voice in order not to give one solid interpretation and deviate from the story and proliferate interpretations. Moreover, this paranoia splits itself into multiplicity everywhere resembling the Cold War surveillance. According to Aryan, such experimentation of paranoia is the anxiety of how life under the Cold War condition of suspicion is that anyone can be a spy of Communist Soviet (2020, p. 153). At one point, the novel's character accusations create a free-floating paranoia in the narrative between students, friends, and co-workers; especially the school principal is trying to find something to accuse Brodie to resign. As Miss Brodie tells her set, "I have to consult you about a new plot which is afoot to force me to resign" (Spark, 1984, p. 5). The accusation of treason is the rhetoric of the Cold War for invisible enemies intermingled within the social relations to confuse interpretations and justify them. Moreover, there is no certainty about the validity of the accusations since they are all based on subjective conjectures of the fragmented narration. In other words, the tone, style, and writing techniques are the Cold War rhetoric manipulated and fictionalized to persuade the reader about treason.

The narrator implants the idea of treason like an internal incoherence between the group of girls and their teacher herself that "they had no team spirit and very little in common with each other outside their continuing friendship with Jean Brodie. She still taught in the junior department. She was held in great suspicion" (Spark, 1984, p. 2). This voice of the omniscient narrator triggers suspicion in the reader about the story of Brodie without mentioning any definite crime or cause of the suspicion. As Aryan argues, "the contemporary woman writer's concrete externalisation of inner dialogic conflict through the creation of character" (Aryan, 2019). Therefore, the novel intermingles multiple contradictory voices which are externalisation of Spark's own inner dialogue. This fragmented suspicion runs along the vagueness of Brodie identifying herself with as someone in her prime. The word prime is a signifier that does not lead to any clear meaning, but it only contributes to invoking the existence of a decentralized text. In the middle of the narrative, the pursuit of the signifier is exposed to have an ontological

question when Eunice Gardiner within a chronological shift talks to her husband, telling him about the death of Brodie who taught them about prime, her husband asks "prime what?" and Eunice answers "her prime of life" (Spark, 1984, p. 26).

Brodie tells stories and others listen carefully and reach different conclusions or add more or less to it. Moreover, the students register the private life of Jean Brodie. Brodie is aware of the investigation that she is resisting resignation unless she is assassinated like Julius Caesar (Spark, 1984, p. 6). At one point, Mary McGregor spies on Brodie and concludes that teachers are having sexual affair. Later on, this evolves to erotic relationships between teachers and students.

Furthermore, these stories are complicated by the endings when nothing can be verified between accusations of Jean Brodie and Sandy stranger whom the narrator deceives the reader not clarifying the accusations but giving their dubious words and keeping their words against each other. Brodie is guilty of a vague treason however; this is negated when one realizes it is Sandy Stranger who intrudes into the biography of Miss Brodie. Similar to the rhetoric of the Red Scare, in the novel everyone is paranoid, fanaticizing and fabricating stories, assumes ominous danger from others and plots against each other as in the case of Sandy and Brodie, as example Brodie thinks that sandy can be a great spy, moreover Sandy believes that Brodie is a dangerous woman who betrayed her students for years. And she talks about her with the headmistress as "She's a born fascist" (Spark, 1984, p. 134). However, Miss Jean brodie is doing more damage to fascism ideology than supporting it by her actions.

The end of the book brings the shock of uncertainty to the reader when it reveals an alternative version of truth quite contrary to the one offered at the beginning of the book. Sandy is registering the private lives of others and suspecting that it is not sex she is looking for but politics. Moreover, Sandy fabricates the fascistic nature of Brodie and says "I'm not really interested in world affairs...only in putting a stop to Miss Brodie" (Spark, 1984, p. 134). Other accusations such as Brodie's sexual affair or other student's affair are classified under her interpretation since these accusations are not a part of Brodie's resignation but only small talks in the form of libel which takes a political appearance of fascism. The rest of the students' stories include motivating Joyce Emily to go to war in Spain and fight for fascists, or Mary McGregor who dies on her way to the war. These stories are all encompassed and contained within how Sandy manipulates the story and rewrites it. Her final shocking comment that she becomes famous cast a doubt on the whole story when she is an author of a psychology book with the name of "The Transfiguration of the Commonplace" (Spark, 1984, p. 136). The elevation of libel from ordinary communication to espionage activities is the nature of Cold War rhetoric that everyone is under surveillance and this cannot be verified which ultimately points at the systematic organization of power of the discourse. The agency of the ultimate voice of the omniscient narrator gives freedom for interpretation, but at the same time it shows the danger of storytelling in social control of the bodies.

II. Conclusion

Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* is a critique of institutional surveillance in restricting individual freedom. It reflects the same cynicism that governed social connections and it is influenced by the rhetoric of the Cold War conspiracy. It has a maze-like narrative style that evokes the paranoia and deception of storytelling through

Sandy Stranger and Miss Jean Brodie whom both symbolizes propagandists. The narrative presents complex plots to provide multiple interpretations, doubts, and accusations on how people spy on each other within the institutions. Spark's novel responses to the authoritarian forces that attempted to restrict individual agency through storytelling. Even though, Brodie appears to be the most important figure in the novel, it is Sandy who functions like an observer, conceives everything and puts pieces and parts together to form a coherent narrative about Marcia Blaine school and Miss Brodie to uncover secrets and conspiracies. Sandy takes both the traditional role of a detective and at the same time a psychoanalyst. Muriel Spark's job in PWE as a black propagandist writer and its effects on her writing style is expressed and practiced in the novel. Sparks propagandist job shaped and mirrored black propaganda which is presented in her novel. For instance, Sandy investigates and interprets her friend's and teacher's actions with suspicion, and Miss Brodie who apparently endorsing fascism and teaching her students about the ideology hence, she is causing greater harm to it because her role is to discredit the ideology in a black propagandist way. Furthermore, this thesis focused on the power of storytelling as a potentially dangerous political act that compels writers to produce unreliable narratives. Therefore, most parts of the novel are narrated by Sandy about Brodie. However, everything Sandy narrates is through her interpretations, and possibly fabrications. The accusation style of the narrative identifies Sandy as an ironic figure who represents institutions of authorship that interprets others and justifies them through re-writing their biography within the school institution. Also, the novel imitates to criticize the Cold War and its propaganda of fabricating stories.

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