

PARANOIA, POLITICS AND FILM: *SALT* (2010)

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ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to analyse and understand American culture. This research will involve the examination and deconstruction of American cultural artefacts. For the purpose of this research, these items of cultural value are film and photograph. The Hollywood-produced Cold War paranoid spy thriller, *Salt* (2010) provides this thesis with a rich vein of materials for scrutiny. So too, the photography capturing the assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, which is embedded into the narrative of *Salt*. Moreover, this thesis will seek to similarly analyse and understand how precisely the film object can convey its various messages to an audience. Peering beyond simple plot narrative, this research examines a multitude of cinematic devices employed within *Salt*.

This research operates within a framework that takes into account the existence of the Cold War. Evidence of this long-standing conflict is found within a number of Hollywood films. These films encompass the theme and leitmotif of the Cold War in both narrative and art. Many of these films describe a profound or irrational fear of the other, whilst concurrently describing Americans as victims. This is what this thesis understands as 'paranoid.' These Hollywood films are compared to and contrasted with *Salt*.

Scholars have historically documented and interrogated the culture of the Cold War. Similarly, there are scholarly studies of the Cold War film and on the construction and methodologies of cinema. These scholarly works have informed and helped shape this thesis.

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Yours Sincerely,

Keith Martin Salter

16th April 2020

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Between 2014 and 2017, I completed a BA in Film Studies and Art History (with Distinction) at Essex University. Upon graduation I was awarded a Master's Scholarship to undertake the MA in Curating, which I successfully completed in October 2018. The skills and talents developed during my time at Essex University have greatly assisted me in researching and writing this thesis. In particular, I wish to acknowledge the significant contribution Drs. Tymkiw, Lodder, Haynes and Professor Chaudhuri have made to my academic and professional development.

Following this, I sought out an opportunity to conduct further research with Macquarie University. I began my Master of Research in Philosophy in 2019, researching the history and culture of the Cold War under the supervision and guidance of Professor Chris Dixon. In November 2019, I volunteered to present a small part of my research materials to the Higher Degree Research Conference. Due to the quality of my research work, I was awarded a partial Scholarship for excellence in research. I wish to acknowledge the guidance and support of Professor Dixon, whose generous feedback has assisted me in pursuing this research and in writing this thesis.

I also wish to acknowledge the efforts of Associate Professor Kate Fullagar, who has provided me with feedback on additional academic components of the Master of Research in Philosophy.

Finally, this thesis would have been impossible to produce had historians failed to write about and document the culture of the Cold War. Equally so, had scholars not disclosed their critical analysis regarding art history, film philosophy and technique. I hope that my research contributes a small part to understanding how the culture of the Cold War is expressed through the medium of Hollywood films.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis will demonstrate, firstly, how film uses history to make an argument; and secondly, how film technique is deployed advantageously to effectively communicate the same argument to an audience. To accomplish this objective, the ensuing examination will focus on a brief film-within-a-film that constitutes a small part of the Hollywood production, *Salt* (2010). This self-contained vignette, effortlessly observed as a short film in its own right, steeped in the logic and mindset of a long and unceasing Cold War, and drawing upon the US cultural product of the paranoid film thriller, provides the foundation for this thesis.

Included in this thesis are four distinct considerations: First, *Salt* is an historical work of art that is not a book; and second, that its lesson in history is contrived; and third, that similar to a book, a film may also be read and understood; and finally, the methodology of communication within *Salt* is treated as a distinct non-verbal international language. Following a summary of the film in this Introduction, the focus of this thesis is the aforementioned vignette, rather than the entire one-hundred-and-one-minute film production.

Visual media competes directly with the book. Alongside social media and televisual production, the film has become a means of communicating historical knowledge – the past – to a significant section of our population. The thesis will treat the short film-within-a-film, which assumes the form of the flashback, as a vehicle for conveying a perspective on the world: both historical and ideological. Accordingly, the existence of this flashback cameo within *Salt* provides the thesis with an opportunity to delve into the cultural history of the Cold War. To properly contextualise this, other Hollywood films that also seek to re-present the past in relation to the Cold War shall be compared to and contrasted with *Salt*.

Salt's narrative revolves around the discovery of a Russian spy who has embedded herself within the staff of the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Upon discovery, she goes on the lam and the traditional Hollywood chase ensues. The twist in this narrative is that despite her past and her current predicament, she now chooses to hunt down and assassinate a dozen or so Russian spies operating on US soil. That the female protagonist must also save the life of the Russian Prime Minister, before similarly rescuing the US President whose reluctance to attack a foreign state seems rather quaint in the modern era, is all very much an edge-of-the-seat thrill ride common to the Hollywood blockbuster.

However, the key issue here is the existence of a brief historical cameo, or flashback, within *Salt* which occurs between minutes nine and thirteen of the film. This concise retelling of the past purports to encompass a precise understanding and analysis of relations between the US and Russia since 1945. Throughout this film-within-a-film, the viewer is forced to forego any examination, however crude and rudimentary, of the massive Russian contribution to defeating Hitler¹ and the subsequent US refusal to acknowledge this historical truth;² the inception of the Cold War between both states and the mutual practice thereafter identified as détente;³ the establishment of mutually assured destruction as military doctrine;⁴ the flashpoint of the Afghan War and its metamorphosis into a twenty-first century forever-war;⁵ and finally, the collapse of the former Soviet Union and its subsequent breakup into independent nations.⁶

Instead, *Salt* provides a flashback narrative encounter that places the complete responsibility of the now-seventy-five-year-old Cold War exclusively upon Russians. Insisting that all Russians,

¹ Ronald Grigor Suny (ed), *The Cambridge History of Russia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 217-267. Geoffrey Hosking, *A History of the Soviet Union 1917-1991* (London: Fontana Press, 1992), 261-295.

² Stephen F. Cohen, *War with Russia?* (New York: Skyhorse Publishing Inc., 2019), 98-100.

³ Stephen F. Cohen, *Sovieticus* (Canada: Penguin, 1985), 22, 133-135. Suny (ed), *The Cambridge History of Russia*, 305-308.

⁴ Cohen, *War with Russia?*, 164.

⁵ Saki Ruth Dockrill, *The End of the Cold War Era* (London: Hodder Education, 2005), 159-162, 176-185.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 36-42.

during their formative years whilst attending school, are indoctrinated if not brainwashed into accepting a virulent ideological position that circulates around a rabid and irrational hatred of America and Americans, but which never makes these same Russian graduates visibly angry or upset so as to give themselves away until it is far too late. To cap it all off, the flashback states that this programme of thought control has been in place for decades, and that America is now teeming with Russian sleeper agents, patiently awaiting the arrival of “Day X.”⁷

Accordingly, this thesis will argue that *Salt* remains a distinct cultural product of the Cold War that cannot be perceived in the reductive light that assumes - often without evidence - that films solely serve to distract and entertain us. This is to not to say that films do not offer viewers an escape from reality: they clearly do provide us with a desired break from routine. However, this thesis argues that the engaging spectacle of film may not be as innocent and neutral as they are sometimes considered to be. Rather, the thesis will argue that films both reflect and reinforce a cultural ideology or hegemony. As Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner have argued:

Films transcode the discourses (the forms, figures and representations) of social life into cinematic narratives. Rather than reflect a reality external to the film medium, films execute a transfer from one discursive field to another. As a result, films themselves become part of that broader cultural system of representations that construct social reality. That construction occurs in part through the internalisation of representations.⁸

By deconstructing *Salt*, these elements of the film are scrutinised and analysed. Therefore, this thesis will conduct a parallel exploration of the filmic methods and techniques utilised by the

⁷ *Salt* (2010), The alleged day of insurgency or uprising, when the mysterious Russian sleeper agent will strike out enmasse, is referred to as Day X within the film’s narrative.

⁸ Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner, *Camera Politica* (USA: Indiana University Press, 1990), 12-13.

team behind *Salt*. In order to fully understand how film uses history to make an argument, we must also acknowledge and identify the technological means that allow for such an activity.

There is little sustained or critical analysis of *Salt*. This historiographic omission is punctuated by two minor exceptions. Tricia Jenkins' otherwise excellent inquiry into the CIA's involvement in Hollywood concluded that actor Tom Cruise was initially slated for the protagonist role, which he later turned down, leaving the gate wide open for an alternate (Angelina Jolie) to pass through and assume the role of protagonist. Jenkins' has nothing more to say regarding *Salt*.⁹ Similarly, Mathew Alford and Tom Secker noted that *Salt*'s Credit List and DVD Extras revealed that:

... the filmmakers behind *Salt* contracted former CIA officer Melissa Boyle Mahle as a technical advisor, but we discovered that they also attained full cooperation from the CIA and that the main creative team, including Angelina Jolie, had a video conference with active CIA agents.¹⁰

A further review of *Salt*'s Credit List does indeed include Melissa Boyle Mahle as a "Technical Advisor." Immediately following her name and title is another of interest: Charles Boklan, who is listed as "Secret Service Consultant." Clearly, both CIA and Secret Service staff provided input into *Salt*, but evidence of the extent of their role and possible influence remains meagre. Internet searches unearthed a plethora of gushing fan-based reviews - largely uncritical by nature and type, and often unverifiable. The three-minute flashback cameo that this thesis focuses upon, which could quite easily and plausibly have its own director, producer, editor, designer and production team - due to its inherent character as a film in its own right - is without accreditation and origin.

⁹ Tricia Jenkins, *The CIA in Hollywood* (US: University of Texas Press, 2012), 50.

¹⁰ Mathew Alford and Tom Secker, *National Security Cinema* (UK: Drum Roll Books, 2017), 51.

Much has been written about the cultural history of the Cold War. Scholars such as Richard Slotkin, Tom Engelhardt, Stephen J. Whitfield and Stephen F. Cohen have analysed many aspects of an ongoing conflict between the US and Soviet Union or USSR (later Russia). Culture is a site of contestation. During the Cold War, Hollywood cinema became a powerful medium for expressing narratives regarding American perceptions and perspectives. This view of the Cold War – that represents only one side of the contest – and its subsequent analysis, remain imperative to this thesis.

Slotkin's core analysis identifies the American cultural trait of "regeneration through violence,"¹¹ whereby the possibility of social progression within American society is intrinsically intertwined with a logic that demands an enemy be present to resist and confront. In turn, Slotkin argues, this logic in action produces a methodology that can be observed historically throughout the existence of America since its early inception shortly after the berthing of the *Mayflower*. This process is premised upon first locating an enemy, before resisting the enemy, and then attacking the enemy, before again, ultimately vanquishing the enemy. Slotkin's analysis of American cultural history and the American national psyche identifies an American cultural requirement, or desire, for an enemy presence, either real or perceived.¹²

Similarly, Engelhardt has identified an American cultural trait that closely resembles Slotkin's "regeneration through violence."¹³ However, Engelhardt's work differs from Slotkin's in that it refers to the quality or state of being rather than the methodology. This quality is identified as "enemy-ness."¹⁴ Engelhardt observes this quality to be present in these three areas: first, the domestically based and somewhat paranoid McCarthy-led anti-Communist witch-hunt (1947-

¹¹ Richard Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation* (New York: Atheneum, 1992), 12.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Tom Engelhardt, *The End of Victory Culture* (USA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), 129.

52). Second, the swift volte-face that demanded Russia (or the Soviet Union, or the USSR) should become the new enemy number one, despite fighting on the same side as the US, and against Hitler during the Second World War. Third, the consistent flow of Cold War film productions, largely from Hollywood, which generally demonised immigrants to America by portraying them as inherently against American society and its concomitant national, social and political interests. Engelhardt's identification of an American national and cultural obsession with a 'must-have' permanent enemy to uncover, detect, or otherwise spotlight feeds directly into the cultural perspective and analysis offered in this thesis: a film such as *Salt* does not exist in a vacuum, but rather, reflects back to an audience and a society its fundamental self.

Whitfield's approach differs from the former two analyses. Whitfield identifies the Cold War as much less a cultural product and projection of a US seeking to invent and maintain an enemy, and much more of an actual war of attrition between Americans and Russians, played out via a contestation for the greater share of universal control. This contest for international supremacy, Whitfield argues, entailed nations actively undermining one another. Whitfield offers little in the way of self-critique or self-analysis, preferring to view the Russians (Communists) as antagonists and not much else. Although parochialism permeates Whitfield's work, he does provide excellent research into the culture of the Cold War within the United States. In addition, Whitfield's pro-American stance provides this thesis with some worthwhile measure of rigour and contrast, and indeed, allows this thesis to incorporate an ardently conservative response to the culture of the Cold War.¹⁵

The works of Cohen have been useful when undertaking research for this thesis. Cohen has lived for extended periods in both Russia and the United States, which has afforded him valuable

¹⁵ Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

insight into the culture of the Cold War. A US-based historian and prolific author on relations between Russia and the US, Cohen has been writing and publishing in this important area for at least four decades. His scrutiny of the culture and activities of the first Cold War (1945-1991) and the second Cold War (2010-2020) provide a comparative perspective. In essence, Cohen's hope for peaceful interactions in the 1980s, has by the 2010s largely evaporated.¹⁶

Many Cold War films explore the theme of paranoia. *Salt* is certainly no exception to norm. Regarding this, Richard Hofstadter's investigation into American political culture, particularly his analysis of the "paranoid style" within the same, provides a lens through which *Salt* can be viewed.¹⁷ In particular, Hofstadter identifies the search for an enemy within - *the witch-hunt* - as "an old and recurrent mode of expression in [American] public life."¹⁸ The pursuit of the traitor is fundamental to the narrative of *Salt*. Similarly, but to a lesser degree, Ray Pratt's exploration of the theme of paranoia within the film is also helpful.¹⁹ Moreover, Ronnie Lipschutz's survey of the Cold War film genre illuminates the persistent cinematic re-imaging of a film character who is "possessed."²⁰ The works of these three historians inform this thesis and help to identify and deconstruct the theme of paranoia that remains stubbornly present in many Cold War films, including *Salt*.

Film theory, whose roots are well-grounded in the academic disciplines of philosophy of art and history provides a set of tools to deconstruct the visual image. Therefore, the work of film theorists and film historians has informed this thesis. Authors such as Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner have influenced this thesis through their efforts in the study of Hollywood film and its

¹⁶ Cohen, *Sovieticus. War with Russia?*

¹⁷ Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style and Other Essays* (USA: Vintage Books, 1967), 3-40.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁹ Ray Pratt, *Projecting Paranoia* (USA: University of Kansas Press, 2001).

²⁰ Ronnie D. Lipschutz, *Cold War Fantasies* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2001). More on this later. Suffice to say, Communists (often as movie-Communists) have been historically re-presented in Hollywood film as being infected with or taken over by an alien (foreign) force. This is "possession."

attendant film grammar. Ryan and Kellner, in seeking to understand how a film communicates and interacts with an audience, precisely deconstruct the Hollywood film product. Their contribution to the study of film language and grammar remains highly sought after by those of us who desire to know what it is that is being stated by and through the popular medium of Hollywood film.²¹ Nora Sayre's 1980s inquiry into the US-produced Cold War films of the 1950s complements this work. Her detailed analysis of the characteristics of "the Russian" and "the Communist" within these films has provided a crucial series of nuanced insights.²²

Film is an important, if contested source of historical knowledge. If we can accept that the film can re-present history and can also further illuminate the context and cultural meaning of its content, our opportunities for engaging with history multiply substantially. For example, using film to teach students about history, by matching the film narrative to the historical record, for the purpose of confirmation or contradiction, assists the student to develop a discerning mind alongside a healthy scepticism. Illuminating what a film can capture and encompass, which clearly travels beyond the familiar format of the documentary, as Rosenstone's survey has demonstrated, can allow the student to access the things the history book could never express, such as the sound of a cannon being fired by the Russian military in order to eject the invader Napoleon from their territories.²³ However, film can alter perceptions and manipulate emotions, sometimes much more emphatically than the written word. Alternately, film can be reductive, sometimes in the name of entertainment. Some historians may fear this will undermine their role and calling. This thesis argues that whatever the content of the film or the book, it remains the job of the historian to deconstruct its constitution down into its constituent parts for scrutiny and critical analysis.

²¹ Ryan and Kellner, *Camera Politica*.

²² Nora Sayre, *Running Time: Films of the Cold War* (New York: The Dial Press, 1982).

²³ Robert A. Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000), 31-32.

Salt communicates with its audience through a variety of means. To analyse these different elements of *Salt*, the works of Robert Rosenstone, John Berger and James Monaco are utilised. Rosenstone perceives the film as a valid means of communicating history and identifies the dynamic image as a competent source of historical education. He argues persuasively that the film can replicate the historical details of the past in a manner that a text-based book cannot. Sounds, emotions, gestures, environments, and backgrounds are critical elements that Rosenstone indicates can be brought to life within the film in a way that exceeds the constraints of the book.²⁴ This author accepts Rosenstone's analysis. Berger's detailed survey of Western material culture, which includes the portrait and landscape painting, pictorial advertisement and still photograph, informs this thesis of the hegemonic presence inherent in such cultural artefacts. Berger's study of cultural ideology brings to this thesis a critical awareness into the custom and practice of film analysis.²⁵ Lastly, Monaco's invaluable technical analysis of film production has helped to identify the specific actions that a film crew may engage in when constructing a film. Monaco's work clarifies precisely what is going on behind the cinematic spectacle, which in turn, assists in our understanding that the Hollywood blockbuster remains a consciously driven enterprise, rather than, the happy accident of the artist-auteur.²⁶

Furthermore, whilst *Salt* exists in the film form, *Salt* also carries and articulates a historical narrative which this thesis contests. To clarify, *Salt's* version of history is false and inaccurate. The negative ramifications that may arise from the practice of this deception are manifold. *Salt's* rampant xenophobia, fear of the other, and quite likely racist rationale seeks to select one race, people, country or nation above and beyond all others and lay the blame for international disharmony at their feet. Therefore, this thesis critically engages *Salt*. Finally, the constraint of a

²⁴ Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past*, 31-32.

²⁵ John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Vintage, 2008). *Understanding a Photograph* (London: Vintage, 2013).

²⁶ James Monaco, *How To Read A Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 135-136.

20,000-word limit upon this thesis has determined that serious and useful concision in writing and expression has been necessary.

CHAPTER ONE: THE COLD WAR FILM

This initial chapter will explore the origins of the Cold War film before commencing examination and analysis of *Salt*. The antecedents of the Cold War film genre lay in the actual Cold War and the concomitant intrigues, fears, tensions, and animosities that it produced, sustained and amplified. American perceptions of and reactions to the Cold War helped shape and formulate this uniquely identifiable Hollywood film product.

Cold War films first began to appear soon after the completion of the Second World War. Produced by Hollywood, this new type of film actually borrowed much from earlier films. In particular, the Cold War film drew upon two existing sub-genres. The first was the spy film sub-genre whose themes were heavily steeped in the anti-communist domestic politics and tense social atmosphere that permeated US society during and after the post-1917 “Red Scare.”¹ The spy film lent to the Cold War film the character of the foreign agent or invader who had penetrated the boundaries of the American nation. It also shared its reaction to this prospective scenario. This generally included the frantic search for such a character; the dramatic moment of discovery; the similarly dramatic moment of evasion, abscondment and escape; a sometimes complicated but nevertheless unrelenting pursuit; and finally, the capture and internment of this undesirable. Rarely did a spy get away.² Alfred Hitchcock’s films consistently invoked this narrative ensemble. Some of his films that explicitly involve chasing down spies include: *The 39 Steps* (1935), *Secret Agent* (1936), *Sabotage* (1936), and *The Lady Vanishes* (1938).

¹ Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 216.

² Mary C. Brennan, *Wives, Mothers and the Red Menace* (USA: University of Colorado Press, 2008), 29. Brennan highlights the difference between Hollywood film and history, stating: “There were a few Soviet spies, but most seemed to have disappeared by the time the FBI got around to looking for them.”

A second antecedent was the film noir sub-genre. Although much more a style rather than a sub-genre, film noir consistently portrayed the US as a place where the American dream had transformed into an American nightmare. Commonplace amongst these films was the thread of paranoia, oftentimes introduced through the cinematic expression of powerlessness that had evolved from a lack of personal will. Film noir subsequently offered to narratively encapsulate and visually suffuse the hunt for any nefarious character with a discrete tone, mood, and style. This ensemble was often readily observed in the chiaroscuro screen palette; a variety of camera angles, some of them irregular; the use of night-time exterior shots, often in the rain; and the additional meanings that may be created from combining these highly visual film elements. *M* (1931), remains a very good example of a film noir where a lengthy pursuit takes place through dim and darkened streets. *The Maltese Falcon* (1941) and *The Stranger* (1946) offer a similar viewing experience.

In essence, the Cold War film depicts a contestation between two divergent forms of polity, which remain so inharmonious and mutually exclusive that conflict is made to seem inevitable. The two sides that compete for ascendancy most often in the Cold War film are Russians (Communists) and Americans. In such films, the role of foreign invader or spy, as described above, is invariably attributed to the character of the Russian. This leaves the role of victim available to be assumed by the character of the American. Cinematic tropes have been established for each, evoking separate and distinct sets of particularities for the audience. These tropes articulate not only physical qualities but also political and moral qualities.³ Furthermore, the Cold War film quite often embraces the theme of paranoia, just as film noir had done so previously. This is generally expressed in three ways. Firstly, the plot narrative can and often does contain elements of skulduggery, intrigue, suspicion, suspense, treachery and Machiavellian strategy. Secondly, the film can

³ Sayre, *Running Time: Films of the Cold War*, 80-81.

stylistically express the theme of paranoia by utilising the methods described above. Thirdly, the characters can display a sense of heightened awareness, exaggerated concern and/or acute sensitivity to the first and within the second. *Red Dawn* (1984) and *No Way Out* (1987) are two exemplars of the Cold War film that are also a paranoid thriller. Therefore, the Cold War film mostly re-presents an American protagonist-victim and a Russian antagonist-penetrator, broadly engaged in a struggle for power, both of whom must navigate their different paths through an unreliable and untrustworthy universe.

Finally, that these Cold War films should often be so incredibly one-sided at times, and so thoroughly xenophobic during others, provides this thesis with extensive materials for examination and analysis. Accordingly, the Cold War film remains a discrete cultural artefact of the US that seeks to express an American-centric version of history that – within the diegetic world of the film – has changed little since 1945. With this in mind, one may consider that the Berlin Wall still stands upright and that the Soviet Union has somehow managed to persist intact. Whilst significant change has occurred in the world, in the eyes of Hollywood the bogeyman of the Russian persists.

1.1 RENDEZVOUS WITH ORLOV

This chapter also begins our examination of *Salt*, which was filmed throughout 2009 and publicly released in 2010. At the time of filming, the Global Financial Crisis was in full swing and stock markets around the globe were continuing to haemorrhage badly. Interest rates had plummeted. Foreclosures had skyrocketed. Firms had gone bankrupt. Homelessness in the US could no longer be concealed. An atmosphere of economic uncertainty had clearly taken hold. Looking back, the Soviet Union had begun to experience a similar fate some twenty years earlier. What had started in November 1989, when the Berlin Wall was dismantled, eventuated into a political and economic collapse of megalithic proportions. It took just two years - until 1991 - for the USSR to come

“crashing down.”⁴ During the course of those two years, financial and social chaos ensued whilst jobs and pension funds disappeared. It was not until the very late 1990s that Russia appeared to stabilise.

Perhaps something similarly devastating was about to occur in the US. Viewed from the perspective of global contagion, the political and economic virus that left the Soviet Union irreversibly stricken now appeared to have made its way into the US. A virus penetrates and is mostly understood to have originated elsewhere. For *Salt*, that penetrating virus is the Russian spy operating within the territories of the US. The antidote is the staff of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) who must conduct their business illegally on US soil. The quarantine is the CIA interrogation room. When the Russian spy-turned-defector bursts free from containment, the risk of contagion increases dramatically. It is within this ideological space that *Salt* operates.

Observing *Salt*, we are located on the ground floor of a tall skyscraper. It is late afternoon and many staff are leaving the building for the day. Two CIA employees chat between themselves as they head for the exit. Just as the two are about to egress the building, a third colleague rushes up to them and in a state of mild concern, states: “We got a walk-in. A defector – ten minutes ago.” A brief discussion ensues: one CIA operative asks: “Here?” Another responds: “He’s Russian. Says he’s FSB but won’t give us any more. Strange guy.” Another question is asked: “How’s his English?” The response is: “Passable; not great.”

The three working joes agree that this matter should be handled immediately, and the trio now return to the ‘office,’ which is soon revealed to be a control room furnished with a large central

⁴ Hosking, *A History of the Soviet Union 1917-1991*, 465. “dismantling ... of the Berlin Wall. This was the keystone whose removal finally brought the Soviet bloc crashing down.”

observation window. Additional staff are present within this space and some of them operate sophisticated computerised devices. Beyond the window, which is constructed from diaphanous glass, is the adjacent space of the CIA interrogation room. In direct contrast to the control room, this space is sparsely furnished: only a table and two chairs are present. Seated in one of the chairs is a person who is cloaked in a black hood. They are alone and unaccompanied. This is somewhat unexpected, as the “walk-in” is by definition a voluntary attendant and is therefore not likely to require restraint.⁵ It is also quite an unnecessary inclusion as it has zero bearing on the overall narrative of *Salt*. It is simply a visual display of American hegemony and prowess. Alongside this, the image of both the hood and the hooded captive remains a variation on the documentary evidence that escaped the walls and fences of the US-operated Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. This imagery of war, which began to proliferate throughout the world’s media c.2004, and only six years prior to *Salt*’s public release, has been described by Iain Boal: “the box, the hood, the wires, the electrodes, these are the banalities of evil.”⁶ The scene does its very best to understate the US rendition and torture programme: even those who voluntarily approach the CIA and have been assessed as ‘no threat’ by the same (the defector is not held behind bars), must be subject to involuntary hooding. A small point, perhaps, but one worth bearing in mind, as this essay unfurls, explores and inspects the strange and curious filmic universe within which *Salt* so readily locates itself.

The historical scenario regarding the actual voluntary defector can be clarified. Tom Engelhardt’s assessment of the encounter between the walk-in and the CIA is plainly stated:

The high-level defector was the rarest pearl in the secret world, his value beyond calculation
... Yet when the “walk in” defector appeared out of the blue at an agency doorstep anywhere

⁵ Engelhardt, *The End of Victory Culture*, 115.

⁶ Iain Boal et al, *Afflicted Powers* (London: Verso, 2006), 36.

in the world, the response was often not jubilation but dismay. CIA agents were taught to treat such defectors with extreme caution – they were sometimes simply turned away – for it was assumed that a defector not already targeted by our side was likely to be an enemy plant.⁷

Observing the voluntary defector from within the control room, Evelyn Salt, the eponymous CIA agent played by the actor Angelina Jolie, perfunctorily requests the hood be removed. Upon its removal, Salt enters the interrogation room and also sits down at the table, opposite the defector. The two now face to face, the interrogation begins, and the defector identifies himself as Oleg Vassily Orlov, a Russian national afflicted with cancer, whose status in America *Salt* fails to clarify, and who insists that he has a novel tale to share with the CIA spies operating under the auspices of *Rink Petroleum*. A brief tête-à-tête then ensues between Orlov and Salt, whereby, Salt mocks Orlov and attempts to provoke him, in an apparent effort to unsettle him and establish ascendancy. Orlov seemingly rises to each challenge with a dour response. This banter-like contest resembles a tennis match and the screen shifts back and forth in shot-reverse shot fashion, reflecting the analogy, before coming to settle upon Orlov's face in close-up. In doing this, Orlov's shoulders are made to fill the frame from left to right and account for the bottom third of the horizontal screen space. Orlov's head and face, the details of which have now been brought into sharp relief, occupy much of the other two thirds of the screen space. It is essentially a passport photograph or mugshot that the viewer is looking at; and, similar to these two types of photograph, the close-up camera shot invites the viewer to exact a closer scrutiny.

⁷ Engelhardt, *The End of Victory Culture*, 115.

In sum, the filmic characters of both Salt and Orlov have now been firmly established. The former as order and the latter as *potential* chaos. *Salt* now embarks upon a history lesson expressed through the flashback.

CHAPTER TWO: THE FLASHBACK

In this chapter Orlov's universe is introduced. We encounter the 'Russian type,' whom, *Salt* insists, can be traced back to a Hollywood version of Russia. Both type and version are deconstructed and analysed. In doing this, comparisons are made between *Salt* and other Hollywood films. Film grammar, which aids in the expression of both type and version, is identified and discussed.

The close-up shot evokes a certain intimacy which Orlov's character further exploits. Now much closer to the viewer, or at least seemingly so, Orlov assumes the presence of the confederate engaged in shadowy activities, who craftily seeks out our confidence without any solicitation from ourselves. Unless we run out of the lounge room or swiftly exit the cinema, it is impossible to avoid the unfolding confessional speech. In foreign-accented English, inflected with a conspiratorial tone, Orlov commences his voluntary revelation with a brief sentence: "1975. The Cold War."

The accented language and manner of Orlov's character appear to borrow from the archetype of the foreigner-who-is-up-to-no-good that seemingly preoccupies a plethora of historical Hollywood narratives. An exemplar of this archetype is the veteran cinematic screen actor Peter Lorre, whose accent and discrete sounding voice, ensured the character he played in *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), served to recall the immigrant for the viewer. It is an important recollection, due to the fact that historically the imagined immigrant has been merged with the imagined radical to formulate the imagined communist within American culture. The post-1917 "Red Scare" highlighted this, as did the subsequent McCarthy period (1947-1952).¹ Perhaps for added emphasis, or perhaps just to be sure a distinct quality of otherness was conveyed sufficiently to the audience, Lorre's character in *The Maltese Falcon* was identified as Joel Cairo. Following the end of military hostilities in Europe

¹ Frances Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold War* (New York: The New Press, 2000). Chapter 13, "The Holy Willies," provides extensive detail on the McCarthy era.

after the climax of WWII, the theme or cinematic quality of otherness began to metastasise throughout a plethora of Cold War films produced by Hollywood. Nick Browne explains the background:

... that novel form of international political enmity called the Cold War – an enmity that motivated the further coalescence of the military-industrial complex and gave rise, as a substitute for a phenomenological sense of personal and national security, to the paranoid structures and nationalist sensibilities of the security state.²

Stephen Cohen adds historical insight here by arguing that the Cold War is somehow self-perpetuating and seemingly endless.³ Stephen Whitfield offers a more nuanced analysis, strongly suggesting that the Cold War has subjugated culture to politics.⁴

A character type was developed that could be visually and aurally identified by an audience as the threatening other. Some were portrayed as immigrants and some were presented as American-born-but-foreign-influenced: all were seemingly menacing Communists. Nora Sayre's wide survey of 1950s Cold War films identified the particular traits of the "movie-Communist." Some were exceptionally haggard and others disgracefully pudgy. Movie-Communists walked on forward slant, wore suits just like their enemy counterparts, were at times effeminate and cast exceptionally long shadows.⁵

² Nick Browne (ed), *Refiguring American Film Genres* (California: University of California Press, 1998), 131.

³ Cohen, *Sovieticus*, 126. "Ever since the cold war began in 1917, unexpected and mysterious incidents have periodically disrupted East-West relations just as they were improving."

⁴ Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 240. "The Cold War had been used to justify not only the restriction and violation of civil liberties but also the subjugation of culture to politics."

⁵ Sayre, *Running Time: Films of the Cold War*, 80-81. "... movies instruct us especially on how American Communists look: most are apt to be exceptionally haggard or disgracefully pudgy. Occasionally, they're effeminate: A man who wears gloves shouldn't be trusted. However, in films that feature dauntless FBI agents, it's very difficult to tell them apart from the enemy, since both often lurk on street corners in raincoats and identical snap-brims while pretending to read newspapers. Just when you assume that the miscreants are massing to plot, they turn out to be the heroes. But you can sometimes spot a Communist because his shadow looms

Orlov's character likely draws upon this cornucopia of tell-tale signs: he is unshaven and is therefore scruffy; he leans into the camera suggestive of a forward slant; he wears a suit similar to the CIA types that interview and detain him; and his haggardness is also metaphorical: the cancer in his body is due to his self-neglect and is not the result of the universal unfairness of nature. Quite possibly, the cancer may be a form of righteous punishment, sent by a God who seeks out and destroys atheist disbelievers.⁶ Hence, it does appear that the old and familiar Hollywood tropes of the Communist have now been transposed to another Hollywood leitmotif: that of the Russian. This use of character type, which can be swiftly identified by a viewing audience, can be further understood. Richard Taylor informs:

Because of this visual appeal, the cinema acts ... on the emotions of an audience rather than its intellect. For the same reason the cinema is more accessible to its audience – less demanding, easier to comprehend than the written or spoken word. It appeals to us at a more primitive, more subconscious level.⁷

So far, the head and shoulders of Orlov continue to fill the screen, whilst his interrogator has disappeared out of frame, making it appear to the viewer that it is they who are conducting the interrogation. To visually complement the forthcoming disclosure, which ostensibly occurs within a CIA interrogation room, itself disguised behind the sham offices of the US-based *Rink Petroleum*, a change must occur on-screen and the current filmic space must be temporarily abandoned. Thus, the screen transitions to a shot of an elegant white and gold vaulted ceiling, observed from the ground-up. Additionally, the camera slowly twirls on its horizontal axis, attempting to simulate the

larger and blacker than his adversary's. Also, movie-Communists walk on a forward slant, revealing their dedication to the cause. Now and then, they're elegantly dressed equipped with canes and stick-pins – which prove them hypocrites. But most are scruffy."

⁶ Sayre, *Running Time: Films of the Cold War*, 77-100. Chapter 4, *Praying: God Bless America*, provides a lucid insight into this phenomenon. Geoffrey Hosking. *A History of the Soviet Union 1917-1991*. (London: Fontana Press, 1992), 227-260.

⁷ Richard Taylor, *Film Propaganda* (US: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1979), 30.

panoramic perspective of one who marvels. The camera shot then tilts downward to reveal a large training space filled with young adult men wrestling in pairs. Another kind of twirling is enacted, as they twist in mutual effort and struggle. In the foreground, we observe two men wrestling; a blond-haired male skilfully rolls a dark-haired teammate onto his back. The dominant wrestler applies a brace to his opponent's neck and shoulder before gazing upward. His eyes shrink slightly to sharpen his retinal focus, and both swiftly fill with intent.

At this moment, the camera draws attention to a touring party skirting the edge of the gym. The group is led by a loquacious docent whose gestures and indications are duly acknowledged by the subsequent looks and glances of the tourists. The camera then focuses on one particular member of the touring party whose disobedient eyes encounter a view far more fascinating. She is a young adult woman, whose straight dark hair is styled into a longish bob-cut; and, she is dressed in plain blouse and long skirt. Her unbroken gaze signals the site of her interest to the viewer. Briefly, the camera adopts a position behind her left shoulder, showing the back of her head in the foreground and the grinning face of her admirer in the lower background. This shot, which is not a point-of-view shot, since it is a viewpoint that does not belong to any character but rather to the audience (as chaperone), intimates the spatial relationships between characters. It also serves to confirm that the two characters have eyes only for one another. In using this technique, which situates the viewer externally to each character, we are able to more fully appreciate the affinity and arousal between the prospective lovers.

To date, the character's point of view has been accounted for by the shot-reverse shot technique. Rather intuitively, the camera now switches to her point of view. Now, in what would appear to be an annoying and unflattering change of status, the captivated wrestler is rolled onto his back as the game of dominance and submission refuses to accommodate any alternative interests or even mild

distractions. Supine and pinned by his opponent, the camera now reverts to his view, and the viewer is treated to an upside-down shot of the female admirer. She smiles earnestly, showing her teeth.⁸ Returning to the right-side-up and in reverse-shot, the wrestler now reappears on-screen and twists his comrade so that, similar to the camerawork, they also reverse positions; now dominant, the wrestler gazes in the direction of the admiring tourist with equal ardour. This brief vignette concludes with a final shot of her smiling at the camera, this time with her teeth concealed, which, of course, indicates that she is smiling in the direction of her sweaty and playful admirer, but perhaps, is now more thoughtful than earlier, when she allowed her initial fugitive smile to escape her feminine perimeter. Throughout this visual testimony Orlov dryly states: "In a Soviet gymnasium in Grozny. A wrestler named Sasha Urdorovich Chenkov meets for the first time the only female Chess Grand Master of her era, Anya Marechia. Within a month they were married and within a year ... a child."

Screen shots appear here of the couple taking wedding vows and experiencing the joy of parenthood. Then, the viewer is returned to the interrogation room. The camera is positioned behind Orlov's right shoulder, bringing his interrogator into view, and enabling the viewer to see and read Salt's manner and expression. Salt appears to be listening intently, if still slightly smug. Although technically similar to the single over-the-shoulder shot just mentioned, this shot differs in that it is being deployed to reduce viewer identification with Orlov's character. By stepping outside of Orlov, particularly when he is describing the young lovers and their progeny, we observe Orlov in a manner similar to Salt and her Agency colleagues, who surveil Orlov from behind the one-way glass window. We are then exposed to the familiar close-up of Orlov's face once again. Taut and expressionless, Orlov persists: "One month more, the child was back in hospital. Sick with fever."

⁸ Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 104. "[The poor] show their smiling teeth, which the rich in pictures never do."

As Orlov is completing this sentence, a musical score impresses itself upon the listener. The score consists of a guitar being slowly strummed, accompanied by a gothic-style orchestral voice whose sounds do not encompass traditional spoken language. Its volume is progressively amplified causing intensity to build. For Hollywood, whose many thousands of cinematic productions include a substantial number of films which have been heavily inflected with the Christian narrative, these sounds serve to recall the presence of demons upon earth and the subsequent fight to keep demons at bay. The conscious insertion of this shot of Orlov, which has been married up with the non-diegetic score in the editing suite, seems to imply guilt. Indeed, as the latter suffuses with the former, Orlov is momentarily transformed into the Devil. And the Devil is never innocent.

A similar score can be found in *The Omen* (1976), where a young child named Damien wears the mark of the beast and is rather implausibly possessed by the Devil, who will subsequently use the pre-school-aged child to dismantle Western civilisation. During this quest, Damien appears to commit murder through the act of “menticide” – identified by Engelhardt as Communist and Asian mind control techniques – and his power to control the minds of others is cinematically emphasised through a cumulative orchestral intensity that also seeks to resemble the gothic style.⁹ In various instances, *The Omen* cinematically sutures the image of a young child together with another subsequent image of violence, by overlaying the sounds of the gothic aria across both images. This linking action by the film score aids in the development of meaning by marking out aurally which images can be read in unison. The visual juxtaposition between these two images serves to represent the young Damien as “possessed.”¹⁰

⁹ Engelhardt, *The End of Victory Culture*, 65.

¹⁰ *The Omen* (1976) provides this thesis with an opportunity to examine the Hollywood depiction of “possession” beyond the constraints of Lipschutz’s argument, in which he identifies “possession” solely in relation to communist thinking and ideas.

With the repetitive chanting of the gothic aria remaining in full swing, *Salt* now presents to the viewer images of the young parents grieving for their lost child and consoling one another in the aftermath. Over this ensemble of sound and screen image, Orlov recounts: “But within days after that, the child was suddenly dead ... Yes, a child was dead ...” The scene fades out to black and then swiftly fades back in to show a cruciform fixture, which is subsequently explored from head to toe by camera tilt. The cross consists of a single perpendicular beam, crossed horizontally by an additional three beams. The crossbeam located at the highest point is short and straight. Heading downward, is the second crossbeam; it is also straight and is the longest. Then, finally, a third short and straight crossbeam can be observed much closer to the ground.

This artefact appears to be a poor attempt at representing the cross of the Russian Orthodox Church, whose lower crossbeam hangs upon the vertical spine in the diagonal manner. Right side in ascent, left side in descent; it serves to indicate where Christ’s feet were placed during crucifixion.¹¹ It is not difficult to correctly render this fact into Hollywood film prop. Indeed, within such a self-conscious rendition of the Russian universe, a simple error, that clearly escaped multiple in-house reviews by filmmaking professionals on the staff of *Salt*, can assume the appearance of direct insult. Finally, the downward camera tilt reveals the cross to be free-standing upright upon a gravesite. At its base, we can see the rear of what is, purportedly, a portrait of the deceased, in front of which rests a bundle of white carnations. A single red rose stands upright and graces the edge of the perpendicular beam of the cross. The gothic-like aria now begins to give way to the newly dominant sound of the helicopter. Orlov completes his sentence: “And yes, a child was buried.”

¹¹ “Department for External Church Relations,” *The Russian Orthodox Church*. Accessed February 3, 2020.

The “tukka-tuk” sound of the helicopter draws out the next scene which fades in to an in-the-air shot of a blue and white chopper.¹² It hovers forward over a large expanse of snow-covered land; the Cold War is icy cold in Russia. This is followed by a jump cut to the interior of the chopper. The viewer is greeted with a close-up shot of a restless baby whose small arms are twitching outward. The voiceover matches this scene with the words: “But the Chenkov baby was alive and ...” On the word “and” the camera drifts diagonally upward and to the right, before settling into its new static position. A red and gold ring has now been brought into view; it is situated on the third finger of a hand. The ring appears to be a thick and solid gold band finished in the signet style. Upon its single flat surface rest a golden wreath, a red enamel star, and the iconic soviet-era hammer and sickle, which is encircled by indistinguishable text, both of which are also rendered in gold colour. At this juncture, the sentence is completed: “became the property of another man.”

The image of the ring matched with the audible expression of these words indicates the child is not only the property of this man, but also the property of the employer that the same ring represents. This filmic strategy is identified as synecdoche: the part that stands in for the whole. Just as close shots of marching feet can represent an army in film, or the expression “the law” can signify the police, both as individual officer and legislatively approved armed militia, the close-up shot of the ring describes a *connection* to a hidden power that remains unseen.¹³ Moreover, the ring is an index of loyalty and servitude on the one hand – in this instance to Communist and/or anti-American ideology – whilst, on the other hand, the ring is also an index of property ownership. Here, the ring functions as label, tag, stamp or brand; and indicates clearly that the man who wears it is himself “the property of another man.”

¹² This description of the helicopter sound appeared in the film *Blood Diamond* (2006).

¹³ Monaco, *How To Read A Film*, 135-136.

Culpability is therefore placed upon the Russian state and the narrative has been sealed off to deny the assignment of blame to any rogue off-the-reservation “wetboy” regarding the kidnapping of the child.¹⁴ Yet in Hollywood films which seek to depict flaws and imperfections within the US government, such as *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (1985), *In the Line of Fire* (1993), and *Enemy of the State* (1998), culpability is transferred to individuals and their actions within compartmentalised branches of US bureaucracy, and scarcely to the US state as a whole. To put it rather succinctly, the dominant tendency in Hollywood film is to present the philosophical and political assumption, through both screen and plot narrative, that the US government is essentially and consistently good and exists in stark contrast to the Russian government which is so dreadfully awful as to be an existential threat to the American way of life.

However, when gazing critically into the actual world of US-Russian international relations, a very different picture may emerge. One that, by contrast, seemingly demonstrates an overt hostility that emanates from within the US and towards the Russian state and the Russian people. The case in point is the recent *Russiagate* scandal. Despite much clamouring from US news outlets, political pundits and other partisan opportunists regarding Russia’s (or Putin’s) guilt, there remains a dearth of evidence to indict, let alone convict in this matter. This is not simple assertion, as the two-year-long Mueller-ran FBI investigation into *Russiagate* failed to provide any conclusive evidence that “Kremlin leader Putin ordered a hacking of the DNC and disseminated its emails to help put Donald Trump in the Whitehouse.”¹⁵

Furthermore, *Salt*’s reluctance to engage with an extant Russia and its inhabitants remains a critical factor when considering its screen and plot narrative. The very idea that a film purportedly about

¹⁴ The expression “wetboy” occurs during the narrative of *In the Line of Fire* (1993). It refers to an assassin employed by the CIA.

¹⁵ Cohen, *War with Russia?*, 96.

Russia and Russians should involve the actual Russian country, nation and people is seemingly anathema to *Salt's* production team. The camera now tilts upward to reveal a man's face in profile and Orlov punctuates the moment with the words: "A master spy who had devised the greatest plan..."

The film now cuts to a long shot of the Makaryev Monastery, located upon the bank of the Volga River within the city of Nizhny Novgorod, Russia.¹⁶ It remains the sole occasion that *Salt* locates itself within the actual country of Russia. Even then, *Salt* deploys exterior shots only: the interior of the "Soviet training facility" that we observe in *Salt*, and which will shortly hereafter be described, is actually a prefabricated mis-en-scene located within the territory of the US.¹⁷ Makaryev Monastery consists of a Kremlin-like citadel that protectively encircles and defensively shields numerous architectural structures. Most of which are adorned with iconic onion-bulb rooftops strikingly similar to those that grace St Basil's Cathedral, which is located in Moscow and across the street from the actual Kremlin. Engelhardt provides an insightful observation:

In this ... [Cold] ... "war," the enemy was shielded from view, his leaders in absentia. His capital was not a city like Berlin, Rome, or Tokyo, but a mysterious set of compounds; not Moscow but the Kremlin, whose ancient walls hid the modern synapses of power...¹⁸

The voiceover emphatically concludes: "a Russian patriot could ever invent: a plan to destroy America."

¹⁶ "Makaryev Monastery," *Nizhny-Novgorod.com*. Accessed February 3, 2020.

¹⁷ "Salt: Filming & Production," *Imdb.com*. Accessed February 3, 2020.

¹⁸ Engelhardt, *The End of Victory Culture*, 114.

The cultural icons of Russian architecture are so poorly accessed by Hollywood that it is quite often the case that St Basil's Cathedral – or more accurately, its cinematic likeness – is marshalled as visual metaphor for both the Russian State (government, administration, defence) and the Russian people (everyone who lives and works in Russia). This scenario is an aberration and a nightmare for the historian, as without the distinctions and categories that class analysis provides, the discipline of history ceases to exist. To clarify, the current population of Russia in March 2020 is approximately 145 million persons.¹⁹ Amongst whom, there exist over 120 distinct ethnic groups, speaking around 100 different languages.²⁰ The overwhelming majority of these individuals are ordinary workers, which includes those in full-time employment, those under-employed, and those without jobs. Such enormous diversity cannot be ignored. To reduce these diverse millions to a single ideological entity identified solely as "the Russian" is both unhelpful and intellectually dishonest.

Finally, the selection of Makaryev Monastery, which appears within *Salt* as the ostensible site of the notorious "Soviet training facility," but is actually nothing more than visual icon derived from borrowed culture, is curious indeed. Its architecture, as described, seemingly blends both Kremlin and St Basil's Cathedral into a single place and space. Politically speaking, the vision is incoherent: are the enemies of America to be found within the political space of the Kremlin or can they be located within the religious space of the cathedral? If America's enemies truly exist within both spaces, points of intersection could be identified and analysed. But if they do not, perhaps it is wise to avoid conflation of this sort. Learning can sometimes occur at a very slow pace. *A Good Day to Die Hard* (2013) would later clarify this point of confusion by blowing up St Basil's Cathedral. Strangely, the indiscriminate bombing of Christians situated within one of the most iconic religious structures within Russia does not seem to occur during the film itself. It is, however, an image that

¹⁹ "Russian Population," *Worldometer*. Accessed March 10, 2020.

²⁰ "Russia," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Accessed March 10, 2020.

remains highly visible and can be found within the film's frontispiece. This shameful agit-prop is still currently available and can be viewed within the Australian iTunes Store.²¹

In sum, Hollywood has consistently deployed a cinematic image of "the Russian" that bears little resemblance to any actual Russian people. An over-reliance on cinematic tropes such as ice, snow, ushanka, vodka and grimness has seemingly reduced Russians, their country and nation, to the status of caricature, at least within the world of Hollywood film.²² Furthermore, the incidence of *Russiagate* is a prime example of how a culturally ingrained and long-standing fear of the other can rise to the surface during a time of domestic crisis. It is this American cultural trait of seeking out an external enemy in times of internal crisis, reflected through the Hollywood production, that informs the complex diegetic world of *Salt*.

²¹ Apple iTunes Store. Accessed February 3, 2020. *The offending image is still in place.*

²² Ice, snow, ushanka, vodka and Russian grimness all feature within the full-length film. The final three are found on US soil.

CHAPTER THREE: THE MONOCHROMATIC PAST

Within this chapter, we find ourselves attending the first part of a presentation lecture. We are introduced to a 'Russian type,' and to Lee Harvey Oswald. Subsequent examination of the Oswald narrative draws upon *Executive Action* (1973) and *JFK* (1991). Finally, we compare the filmic presentation to the art exposition.

Lacking any water to lubricate his mouth and throat, the persistently raspy voice of Orlov continues: "It had all started with an American named Lee Harvey Oswald." This bold statement is matched to an on-screen image that contains within itself two men. Only one man exists within the diegesis of this vignette. This man is standing upright; is dressed in military uniform and deploys a riding crop in the manner of a stick-pointer. The soldier's cap appears a size too large, which, along with the riding crop, are two props that serve to make light of his ostensibly serious demeanour. It is faintly reminiscent of English comedic silliness, the likes of which includes *Dad's Army* (1968-1977) and *Fawlty Towers* (1975-1979). The soldier is located within a darkened room, suitable for the purpose of slide projection, and is giving a presentation. Perhaps to infer audience receipt of the briefing, the camera has been positioned at a low angle and looks up into the face of the soldier whilst he delivers his brief. It is the perspective of the common sitting position adopted during attendance of such informative and revelatory events. However, it is a view that is also aligned with the perspective of the powerless: the way a pupil may look up to a teacher or the manner in which a child may encounter the adult world. It is certainly a mode of observation that evokes a slowly rising sense of inferiority. The second man is the subject of the presentation, which we will come to later.

The wall behind the soldier and to his right (left screen) contains a painting and several upper windows that let in minimal light. There is also a ceiling light fixture which emits muted

luminescence from an array of delicate hanging branches. In all, the architectural arrangement is more medieval castle than modern military control room. Strangely, the wall and its contents appear bent, as if everything were about to fall and crash into the soldier, which does not happen. Upon closer inspection, the wall and its contents are indeed found to be crooked and skewed; and, the lighting fixture sticks out at such an awkward angle as to become quite humorous when observed in freeze-frame. Accordingly, the actor who plays the soldier is standing upright, however, due to the skewed arrangement to his right, he does appear to be succumbing to an overwhelming pressure, which in turn conveys a sense of the teetering and off kilter. The entire composition is further embellished by the low camera angle that creates the illusion of a top-heavy screen. A separate background image has been merged with the foreground image containing the soldier and his large photograph. This is an exemplar of how a visual composition can express a metaphorical allusion and/or infer a psychological state of mind. Ryan and Kellner argue that "... the sort of representations which prevail in a culture is a crucial political issue."¹ These authors also indicate that our experience of daily life is, at least in part, constructed from "cultural representations [that] ... give shape to psychological dispositions ..."² Both confirm that "... the Hollywood narrative form, ... privileges the personal outlook over structural representations."³ Therefore, this particular filmic composition quite clearly demonstrates that the editing process is in practice not purely technical or artistic, but also ideological. The editing effects and technical feats discussed are self-consciously designed and implemented to reinforce the philosophy of *Salt*: that Russians are unreasonable, irrational, and crazy.

¹ Ryan and Kellner, *Camera Politica*, 13.

² Ibid., "Cultural representations not only give shape to psychological dispositions, they also play an important role in determining how social reality will be constructed, that is, what figures and boundaries will prevail in the shaping of social life and social institutions. They determine whether capitalism will be conceived (felt, experienced, lived) as a predatory jungle or as a utopia of freedom. Control over the production of cultural representation is therefore crucial to the maintenance of social power, but it is also essential to progressive movements for social change."

³ Ibid., 126.

The aforementioned soldier has continued to loom over his audience and now wafts the hand-held indicator in the direction of a projection screen standing adjacent to him. Upon the screen can be observed a large, monochromatic, still photograph. Contained within its boundaries is the ostensible image of Lee Harvey Oswald, who, in turn, accounts for the presence of the additional man. This remains significant, as Oswald officially remains the sole individual found culpable of killing the US President, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, on 22nd November 1963.⁴ It is noteworthy at this juncture to make two important observations. Firstly, the man in the photograph does not appear to be the actual Lee Harvey Oswald, but rather, a ring-in, who reappears in the final monochromatic photograph and is identified as “Alek.” The man in the photograph stands with his arms bent upward at the elbows; both his hands are shaped into fists. He grins triumphantly as he punches the air. He is situated outdoors, before a rather disproportionately sized building, and wears a military kit consisting of dark fatigues and white belt. The camera then cuts to an additional head and shoulders shot of the same image; a close-up shot that serves to indict Oswald as ‘a Russian spy’ and assassin. Secondly, that the identity of the historical Oswald is uncertain at best, given the existence of a significantly under-reported fact that Ian Macfarlane describes below:

When he was arrested after the assassination, Oswald was allegedly in possession of *duplicate identification* – one set being in the name of [Alek James] Hidell, the other being Oswald’s.⁵

Within the second photograph, we observe Oswald smiling and in the company of two unidentified men. One appears to be a companion, whilst the other carries the sombre expression of officialdom.

⁴ “JFK Assassination Records. Chapter 1: Summary and Conclusions,” *National Archives*. Accessed January 30, 2020. Ian Macfarlane. *Proof of Conspiracy*. (Melbourne: Book Distributors, 1975), 5.

⁵ Macfarlane. *Proof of Conspiracy*, 67-68. (author’s italics). “The Hidell identification consisted of a Selective Service notice of classification (which bore Oswald’s photo) and a Marine Corps certificate of service. The name on both cards was ‘Alek James Hidell.’ Then, of course, just to complicate matters further, there was the Fair Play for Cuba Committee membership card, signed by ‘A.J.Hidell, Chapter President,’ that carried Lee Harvey Oswald’s name.”

Within the third, Oswald sits amongst three companions, all of whom are seemingly enjoying themselves. He exudes a youthful insouciance as he gazes directly at the photographer. Within the fourth, the viewer is confronted with the familiar historical image of Oswald holding both newspaper and rifle aloft. For those who can recall the original photograph, the lower section seems to be missing. Perhaps sensing the viewer's reaction, which has been wholly provoked by *Salt's* refusal to fully inform, an intuitive cut is made to reveal the photograph in full detail. The final photograph follows and depicts the faux Oswald in the style of the military mugshot; the camera briefly lingers before choosing to focus on a small section of the same black and white photograph. As each photograph departs the screen, the arrival of its replacement is signalled by the familiar sound of the camera click.

After observing the initial photographic image of *Salt's* Oswald, which had remained prominent within the mis-en-scene of the briefing room, two changes occur. Firstly, the additional photographs which successively appear on-screen take turns consuming the entire screen space. Thus, the viewer is not observing people during a presentation, but rather, attending one themselves. Secondly, there is an increase in filmic pace, whereby, things seemingly speed up as the photographic-based montage sequence discloses its contents. The faster visual pace of the montage sequence is paired with a change in musical tempo and intensity: a brass section reaches for its high notes and once in its grasp, heartily sustains them. These sounds recall the heroic victory: a triumph over adversity, over another people, of the human will. Further complementing screen image and musical score is an additional filmic element: the voice of the character of Orlov. Just as the rapid flick-book style of montage revelation increases the visual pace of *Salt*, and the orchestral symphony of wind-driven brass amplifies and intensifies the aural tempo, so too does Orlov's tone gain through a similar increase in intensity. Invoking dramatic emphasis, Orlov now discloses: "In 1959, he emigrated to

Russia. Three years later, he returned home, but the man who came back to America was in fact a Russian spy named Alek.”

We observe this final photograph just as it briskly displaces its former, in the recurrent manner of the rapidly successive snapshot. But we have now re-entered the diegesis - and, also returned home – to the briefing room and its projection screen. The spoken words “named Alek” are given added emphasis as the screen image jump cuts to a mid-shot of the bottom left-hand corner of the final photograph, where a name has been added in handwritten script. It reads “Alek. 1961.” Accordingly, the riding crop, once again, is emphatic.

Two Hollywood films that have attempted to make sense of the 1963 Kennedy assassination are *Executive Action* and *JFK*. Both films strongly suggest that Lee Harvey Oswald was identified during the planning stage of an assassination project as a likely and viable prospective candidate for receiving the blame for any illegal killing that might result from any implementation, or attempted implementation, of the aforementioned project. Ronnie Lipschutz confirms that Oswald was “an ex-marine whose political proclivities and mental stability were none too clear.”⁶ Similarly, both *Executive Action* and *JFK* provide strong hints that Oswald was actually a US intelligence agent whose travel itinerary brought him to the attention of the conspirator-killers, who had collectively realised that a man who appeared to have connections with both Russia and Cuba could more easily (than other prospective patsies) be presented and portrayed as a foreign spy and assassin-who-has-penetrated-a-vulnerable-US. Neither film is able to provide any definitive answers – this is the nature of the paranoid conspiracy – but each relies on historical data and events to formulate a hypothesis regarding the assassination of President Kennedy.⁷

⁶ Lipschutz, *Cold War Fantasies*, 37.

⁷ Joan Mellon, “EXECUTIVE ACTION: The Politics of Distortion.” *Cineaste* Vol. 6, No. 2 (1974): 8-12. Mellon remains highly critical of *Executive Action*, stating on page 10: “... the very removal of Kennedy by his Pentagon intelligence opponents is mentioned in the

In contrast, whilst *Salt* accesses and deploys historical artefacts, each of which emits an aura of ingrained narrative, the film remains unable to logically and coherently process the revelatory materials contained therein. Oswald is an American. By refusing to explore Oswald's time spent in the US - which would include his upbringing, schooling, training, job, and military service – all of which historically occurred prior to Oswald's initial trip to Russia, and remains crucial to any examination of Oswald's biography, *Salt* is clearly re-presenting history in a manner that ignores widely understood fact. Thus, without an American history as such, Oswald can be made – narratively speaking – to appear as if he was a product of Russia, who subsequently travelled to the US to enact a sinister foreign plot.

Following this train of thought, it is not difficult to discern that the character of the actual Lee Harvey Oswald has, since his death, become in many ways an interchangeable commodity. Oswald can be anyone and anything we want him to be. Indeed, Oswald can provoke rage or elicit sympathy, and sometimes both within the same film, book or journal article. He can be made to appear naïve and innocent or damningly guilty. The only constant is that the image of Oswald always represents a US domestic scenario where something quite serious went very wrong. What that something is, is often the subject of fierce cultural debate within the US and elsewhere. In all of this, we must endeavour to remember that the actual Oswald cannot possibly be found to have lived all of these at-times-contradictory lives.⁸

Finally, the business of presenting and re-presenting history is critical to our cultural institutions such as the museum. Such esteemed places and spaces harbour a rich vein of cultural meaning

film not to suggest their possible role in the plot, but to explicitly show them innocent of it." Christopher Sharrett, "Debunking the Official History: THE CONSPIRACY THEORY IN JFK." *Cineaste* Vol. 19, No. 1 (1992): 11-14. Sharrett defends *JFK*, arguing that Oswald and Clay Shaw were known confederates in the assassination.

⁸ Mellon, 8-12. Mellon devotes herself to a discussion of the (filmic) *treatment* of Oswald. Priscilla J. McMillan, "JFK and Oswald: The Inconvenient Truth." *World Policy Journal* Vol. 24, No. 3 (Fall 2007): 99-102. McMillan discusses the actual Oswald she interviewed in Russia, shortly after his defection in November 1959.

which is most often accessed via the art exposition. Many of these art exhibitions, including the extravaganza and the gala, rely upon mediums and aids such as the plaque, poster, docent speech, guided tour and audio guide to provide various publics with access to the aforementioned cultural meaning deemed by museum curators to be residually present within the artefact. But how can we be sure that the curators have got it right? And, that their understandings and interpretations are correct? In truth, we cannot be sure at all. In light of this, this thesis argues, that *Salt's* brief film-within-a-film is indeed an art exposition (montage sequence) complete with guided tour (camera angles) and audio guide (voiceover narration). What we have learnt about our culture, however, remains to be seen.

In sum, both the soldier-presenter and Oswald are variants of an archetypal Russian that Hollywood has a long history of producing and promoting through its film productions. It is an archetype that is inexact and prone to exaggeration. At least some of the historical artefacts presented are genuine, but their narratives have been altered to fit *Salt's* reconstructed history. Narratives are critical to both film and museum. Whomsoever controls the narrative may turn history to their advantage.

3.1 THE MONOCHROMATIC PAST II

At this juncture, a change occurs. *Salt* shifts from an examination and assessment of the history, habits and character of Lee Harvey Oswald, and launches into a cognate exposition of the Kennedy assassination. The entire screen is again consumed with yet another black and white still photograph. Similar to the notorious image of Oswald with newspaper and rifle in hand is another image whose contents are also very familiar. This photograph reveals the presence of US President John Fitzgerald Kennedy and his wife Jackie Kennedy. They can be observed together, riding in the rear seat of a car and waving to a gathered crowd, in Dallas, Texas. The photograph lingers on-screen

whilst Orlov clarifies for the audience: “On November 22nd, 1963, Alek became the first success of the new programme...”

Thus, *Salt* marshals a history of sorts to its cause, and argues that a Russian spy and assassin murdered the US President in 1963. Within the following photograph, we observe a rifle miraculously uphold itself atop a window ledge. The perspective originates from a height that is many floors above ground level and shows a passing car on the road below. The barrel of the firearm has a rifle-sight attached which, together with the rifle butt, fill out the left-hand section of the photographic space. The overall cinematic effect is to position the viewer as shooter-sniper.⁹ Within the third photograph, a Secret Service agent leaps onto the rear of the Presidential vehicle; Jackie Kennedy can be observed attending to her shot husband. Within the fourth, people lay on the ground and take cover whilst uniformed police rush through the both public and photographic space. For those familiar with the JFK assassination narrative, the photograph appears to be looking somewhat generally in the direction of the ‘grassy knoll.’¹⁰ Within the fifth, a single newspaper and its dual headlines remain prominent. It reads: “President Dead. Shot by Assassin.” Two more photographs follow. The sixth shows the head and face of Oswald with a clenched fist raised somewhat defiantly to temple-height and is matched with the words: “and a hero...”

The final photograph then reveals Oswald’s gruesome end. With his face contorted in agony, and his body rapidly collapsing due to the forceful pressure of the bullet that Jack Ruby had murderously fired into him, Oswald can offer no words in his own defence. This final image is also aligned with Orlov’s commentary. He completes his sentence: “of the Soviet Union.”

⁹ Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 583-584. Describing a similar technique utilised within a photographic essay in *Life* magazine (Fall, 1969; Photographer: Ronald Haeberle), Slotkin states: “a terribly ironic metaphor which aligns observer with killer.”

¹⁰ Macfarlane, *Proof of Conspiracy*, 84-88.

Let us closely examine the narrative content of this assemblage. First, Lee Harvey Oswald travelled to the Soviet Union and never returned to the United States. Second, Oswald was 'replaced' by another man, a spy named "Alek," who had received special training through induction into a 'programme.' Third, this 'programme' was conducted within the geographical boundaries of the Soviet Union and managed by the Soviet state. Fourth, Alek the spy was given the task of penetrating the borders of America, in order to begin preparations to assassinate the US President. Fifth, Alek apparently completes the preparatory arrangements and follows through: Alek fatally shoots the US President in November 1963. Sixth, Alek, and not Oswald, is publicly defiant post-assassination. Seventh, it is Alek who is assassinated by Jack Ruby.

Now extrapolated, these seven nodal points of the storyline can assist us in better comprehending the messages inherent within *Salt*. They are: first, the former Soviet Union had the power and will to 'disappear' people who travelled to its bloc of nations, the largest and most well-known being Russia. Second, once a tourist was 'disappeared,' the former Soviet Union would cheerfully seize this opportunity to manufacture a replacement for this missing person. Third, the former Soviet Union had a sinister programme in place dedicated to this nefarious endeavour whose operations began no later than 1959. Fourth, the expression "Soviet Union," accounts for everybody who was living and working behind the Iron Curtain at the time, not just the totalitarian regime of Stalin and his apparatchiks. Fifth, the ordinary people of the Soviet Union, and not the state-sponsored programme managers and operators, viewed the actions of Oswald (or Alek, posing as Oswald), as a "hero."

Therefore, a critical reading of *Salt's* narrative thus far reveals a chasm between the film and history. First, the Soviet Union did indeed cause individuals to disappear from wider society, largely into the

prison work camps, or gulags, located in Siberia.¹¹ However, there does not appear to be any historical data that strongly indicates or proves that tourists, travelling to or through the Soviet bloc of nations, were similarly subjected to this cruel fate. Second, whilst many nations have produced spies, a handful of which have travelled to other nations to gather information or disrupt local activities, these dubious individuals, who may have fake identities and wear disguises, are not, and never have been, (sub)human clone-like replacements, who supplant and assume the likeness of their victims, for the express purpose of concealing their nefarious plots and intrigues. Third, there is a clear distinction between the state apparatus and the ordinary millions of people the same apparatus either furthers or constrains. *Salt* appears to ignore this distinction, and thereby situates itself within the overlapping territories of Sovietophobia and Russophobia,¹² when claiming that all Soviets (or Russians, since *Salt* uses both terms interchangeably), approved of killing the US President, which, of course, remains unproven. Last, the theme of replacement by another culture or way of life which seems to have permeated the American cultural perspective, this thesis argues, is due to its germane connection to the American nation-state's origins.

The American settler society, which is not a unique American model of social expansion as the Australian experience attests to, is one that has historically fought violently against others for its survival and growth. An intolerance of social and political plurality fuelled this violent struggle for settler ascendancy, which sought to replace those others – Native Americans - already living upon the land. The American expression of these historical practices was labelled and understood by Americans as Manifest Destiny, “with its assumptions of political and moral superiority and uplift.”¹³ In sum, the inaccurate historical narrative contained within this brief monochromatic cameo is fed by two fears. First and foremost, the fear of ‘them doing to us what we have already done to others’

¹¹ Cohen, *Sovieticus*, 87-90.

¹² Ibid., 19-23. Cohen, *War with Russia?*, 171-176.

¹³ Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past*, 62. Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 30.

is what appears to be motivating the paranoid concerns that Americans have regarding being replaced. But there also remains a persistent secondary fear, which is, that Americans will not know who they can trust, during the time of the 'great replacement,' because these alien-invader-clone types will be indistinguishable from trustworthy, decent people. This fear of comeuppance, often intertwined with the very natural fear of ambush, is the lifeblood that pulses through the veins of the Hollywood film script. Often it has been the film genre of science fiction that has so vividly encompassed these fears and anxieties. Films such as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951) and *Independence Day* (1996) highlight these themes. So too do the television series: *V* (1983-85 & 2009-11) *Twilight Zone* (1959-64 & 1985-89) and *X Files* (1993-2018).

But the prospect of an unanticipated and unexpected invasion of US territories has also been explored within the film genre of the Cold War espionage thriller. Both *Telefon* (1977) and *The Double* (2011) attempt to demonstrate the aesthetics of subtle infiltration. *Telefon* takes the narrative route of the invisible mass invasion, whereby numerous otherwise unconnected persons, all of whom are living in the US, are each 'activated' after receiving a telephone call from a rogue Russian operative. The swift activation is apparently the result of brainwashing, mind control and/or "menticide," which has rendered the individual receptive to the caller's demands. *Telefon* fails to explore or divulge why such a plethora of saboteurs and assassins has been assembled and inserted into America.¹⁴ The viewer is left to assume that it cannot be for any good reason. These themes regarding the loss of individual control and willpower echo *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962), particularly since once the phone call has been received by the unsuspecting individual, they are immediately overcome with a compulsion to act and then must commit some bad deed.¹⁵

¹⁴ For a definition of menticide, see page 23.

¹⁵ Susan L Carruthers, "The Manchurian Candidate (1962) and the Cold War brainwashing scare." *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 18:1 (1998): 75-94. Thomas Doherty, "A Second Look: The Manchurian Candidate." *Cineaste* Vol. 16, No. 4 (1988): 30-31.

Moreover, a film such as *Telefon* is useful here because if we are to accept the premise of *Salt* then we must necessarily ponder what will occur when *Salt's* Russian child-warriors naturally evolve into adults. *Telefon* presents the argument that these same indoctrinated and brainwashed child-warriors so readily observed within *Salt* will always remain susceptible to foreign influence, no matter how long they have lived in the US. All that is needed is one telephone call and these grown-ups, some now with kids of their own, will wreak havoc and bring forth social upheaval to American society. Alternately, *The Double* sticks with the traditional format of the espionage thriller, whereby a single agent penetrates the nation's borders surreptitiously prior to infiltrating a prominent and vital American organisation. Only this time around, it is two Russian spies who have breached the CIA's security screening process to gain employment therein. From this position, both of these 'doubles' can theoretically assault America and Americans. Thus, *The Double* serves as a similar yardstick for *Salt*. In this manner, *Salt's* Russian children described above, grow up and seek employment in the US Security Services for the singular purpose of destabilising the country that is by now their homeland.

Therefore, all three Hollywood productions re-present Russians as threatening to Americans and their interests. Also, if an individual is suffering from a loss of personal control or willpower, then they are unlikely to be able to present their perspective for consideration. Finally, both *Telefon* and *The Double* starkly illustrate (at least some part of) the life trajectories of *Salt's* young Russian children. It is not much of a life to speak of.

3.2 CLOSE EXAMINATION OF THE PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTEFACT

Selecting just one photograph from the above assemblage – the constraints of this thesis make additional examinations impossible – we can observe and clarify how a single arrested image can

be put to work in an endeavour to recreate the past. The chosen photograph will be the sixth as described above.

A photograph is widely assumed to be a document of verification; a type of evidence that largely remains beyond question and challenge inasmuch as the photograph by its very nature asserts that it was there to capture the event, even if we were not. John Berger describes the historical emergence of the photograph: “the photograph became the dominant and most ‘natural’ way of referring to appearances. It was then that it replaced the word as immediate testimony.”¹⁶

Moreover, when one constructs a history from historical remnants and artefacts, one necessarily infuses one’s production with an ideology and purpose. That is to say, the recreated past now reflects current perspectives and sensibilities that we project as we look back, and that, these perspectives and sensibilities may very well have been absent contemporaneously. Indeed, when we re/construct our past, we can sometimes do so in an effort to justify the present. Robert Rosenstone calls for prudence when observing the ‘historical’ film: “we must remember that on the screen we see ... selected images ... carefully arranged into sequences to tell a particular story or to make a particular argument.”¹⁷ Berger adds weight to Rosenstone’s argument:

When a painting is reproduced by a film camera it inevitably becomes material for the film-maker’s argument. A film which reproduces images of a painting leads the spectator, through the painting, to the film-maker’s own conclusions.¹⁸

¹⁶ John Berger, *Understanding a Photograph* (London: Vintage, 2013), 49.

¹⁷ Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past*, 34. “However much film utilises footage (or still photos, or artefacts) from a particular time and place to create a “realistic” sense of the historical moment, we must remember that on the screen we see not the events themselves, and not the events as experienced or even as witnessed by participants, but selected images of those events carefully arranged into sequences to tell a particular story or to make a particular argument.”

¹⁸ Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 26. “When a painting is reproduced by a film camera it inevitably becomes material for the film-maker’s argument. A film which reproduces images of a painting leads the spectator, through the painting, to the film-maker’s own conclusions. The painting lends authority to the film-maker. This is because a film unfolds in time and a painting does not. In a film

We will leave aside here any discussion regarding the similarities and differences between the traditional oil painting and the monochromatic photograph. Instead, let us understand the important convergence between Rosenstone and Berger. For Rosenstone, it is the selection, arrangement and sequencing of historical materials that serves to construct an argument within a film. For Berger, firstly, historical artefacts lend an authority to the filmmaker that may not otherwise exist; and secondly, the successive image, where one film image is consistently displaced and replaced by another, is the process by which a film presents its argument, which Berger argues, cannot be contended with due to its very nature. Both arguments can be distilled down into a single point: that what films do with their historical artefacts is *subject them to the methodology of curation*.¹⁹ Similar to the art exhibition extravaganza, a multi-million-dollar film production is of course made manifest through the conscious actions and processes of planning, designing, scheduling, arranging, structuring and refining. And just as the display contents of any significant art exhibition is not left to chance, this same curatorial process of selection, composition and arrangement ensures that the contents of a film such as *Salt* are similarly present not by accident but by the conscious demands of political sponsor, financier, and auteur.

The sixth photograph contains within itself the familiar image of Lee Harvey Oswald: his face with agitated expression and his raised fist engulf the greater part of the photographic space. Visually, it is a statement of defiance. However, upon closer inspection one can observe a handcuff laced around the wrist of the upright arm that is supporting the fist. This occurs quite close to the lower

the way one image follows another, their succession, constructs an argument that becomes irreversible. In a painting all its elements are there to be seen simultaneously. The spectator may need time to examine each element of the painting but whenever he reaches a conclusion, the simultaneity of the whole painting is there to reverse or qualify his conclusion. The painting maintains its own authority."

¹⁹ Cynthia Freeland, *Art Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 69. "Museum displays clearly affect perception of artworks." N. Cummings and M. Lewandowska, *The Value of Things* (Basel: Birkhauser, 2000), 25. "... the modern public museum – a space to generate and police narratives regarding all objects, images and information."

boundary of the photograph and remains unacknowledged within *Salt*. In light of this, it is worthwhile to compare and contrast the original historical photograph to the one being deployed by *Salt*, which has been altered by cropping and framing.

The original photographic image of a manacled Oswald remains of course a historical document and artefact that possesses significant cultural value and meaning to Americans and others. The photograph was taken by Bill Winfrey, a photographer working for *The Dallas Morning News*, shortly after the assassination of President Kennedy and the subsequent arrest of Oswald, on November 22, 1963. It has since been collated into the Tom C. Dillard collection which is held at *The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza*, located in Dallas, Texas. Within the boundaries of this photograph, the purported killer of President Kennedy can be observed in the custody of the police. Oswald has not been placed behind bars. Rather, Oswald stands upright and addresses a media scrum, which has strangely gathered within the official space of the police station. It is within this seemingly liminal space, possibly located somewhere between interview room and jail cell or police transport van (the means of incarceration must exist somewhere within the police facility), that Winfrey first took aim with his camera before taking his snapshot. Later, Jack Ruby would act similarly, although his own handheld device was far more personally intrusive.

The Winfrey photograph encapsulates Oswald and his police-escort-captor from waist to head and continues upward to include the ceiling. A sea of men abounds – apparently no women have been admitted to this important space – with a single man occupying the greater portion of the right side of the image (left screen). This man brandishes a camera that has been fitted with a silver half-dome that houses a single flashbulb and wears the expression of one whose thoughts are momentarily struggling to keep pace with events. Oswald is situated to this man's left (right screen). His arms and hands are to his front and his wrists are strained as he pulls each arm in the opposite direction,

rendering taut the small chain link that transforms the two large metallic bangles from vain adornment into personal restraint. In doing this, Oswald's right arm remains perpendicular from the elbow up and is completed by a clenched fist, commonly observed when someone is fettered at the wrist. His left arm is twisting away from the right, creating a visual symbol which states: "look what they have done to me," and "can you see that I am in handcuffs." Throughout this moment, Oswald is clearly making no effort to break free, or to otherwise abscond, but is quite simply communicating to a national and international audience via a fairly rudimentary non-verbal symbolism. That Oswald is being held against his will, and is being treated disrespectfully, is the message that Oswald's perceived audience is likely expected to receive.

The distance that the original photograph affords the viewer enforces this message by negating the psychological perspective in favour of the ethical. This has been achieved through the inclusion of surrounds within the photographic space, which in turn assists in the arousal of viewer empathy. Thus, the Winfrey photograph is not a close-up shot encouraging scrutiny of Oswald alone. It remains, rather, a wider shot that effortlessly provides the viewer with a staggering array of visual detail, all of which can be independently assessed and analysed. But in performing this critical process of understanding, one does not reasonably assume that a random constellation of persons, artefacts and locations has come about by accident, and instead one seeks to determine the precise nature of the human relationships contained therein. This is indeed how we make sense of the arrested image. Which is to say, that by a rudimentary examination of the photographic contents, one may come to understand and gain insight into the intersecting and overlapping relationships that must necessarily exist between Oswald, police, reporters, and photographers. The locale of the police station may also further affect one's critical analysis.

Furthermore, the primary function of all photography is twofold: firstly, to make use of the inherent ability of the visual image to *express something coherent*; and secondly, when depicting human interactions, to reveal the intricacies and idiosyncrasies of power relations. Historically, this has commonly been accomplished through the depiction of human suffering, most of which has been the result of human actions.²⁰ Winfrey's original photograph undoubtedly describes the power relations between all parties present alongside depicting Oswald's suffering, thereby reflecting back to ourselves our own social arrangements and modes of thought and action. This photographic reflection serves a personal and social interest in encouraging one to reflect further, perhaps at a later time and within the space of one's own imagination. Conversely, the doctored (edited) photograph enmeshed within *Salt's* exposition fails to give access to much at all beyond the desired cinematic effect which is to show Oswald in a state of elation, celebration and jubilation all of which aids in the ultimate condemnation of Oswald as the triumphalist anti-hero.

It is this monochromatic past, as described, that forms the nucleus of the ensuing narrative. Without the arrested black-and-whiteness of what-was-then, the viewer would not possess enough vital details to fully gather the complete meaning underlying the next stage of *Salt's* metamorphosis: a dynamic and polychromatic present. Accordingly, a brief fade-out to black occurs, followed by a fade-in. The transition does not last long but is just slow enough for the human eye to perceive its dynamic presence and subsequently understand, via film grammar, that a change is about to be invoked. Once the transition is instantiated, we again encounter Orlov's foreign-accented narration: "The spymaster was now given the go-ahead to create many more like Alek."

²⁰ Berger, *Understanding a Photograph*, 56.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE POLYCHROMOUS PRESENT

The final chapter will explore the change from black-and-white to colour images within *Salt*. A critical comparison will be made between *Salt* and an additional film: *Young Pioneers of the Soviet Union* (1978). Following this, close analysis of the colour vignettes will ensue. We will look deeply into *Salt's* treatment of the child. Finally, an examination of the ring as metaphor will complete this chapter.

Presently, colour floods onto the screen, marking out a further change by contrasting sharply with the monochromatic past. The contents of the screen palette are unique and peculiar: they can best be described as muted, faded and washed-out. The richness and vividness of colour which had formerly pervaded the diegesis has now disappeared. At first glance, it appears that the highly stylised screen palette might simply be a filmic means to differentiate between the recollective vision or 'mindscreen' of Orlov and the diegetic world of *Salt*. Yet upon further exploration it can be confirmed that this denial of colour intensity serves to emulate a particular historical artefact. The film, *Young Pioneers of the Soviet Union* (1978), which is a Soviet production and is part documentary and part mild propaganda, exhibits a tonal palette that is not at all dissimilar to *Salt's* muted colour palette. In doing this, *Salt* seemingly attaches to itself a history that it did not participate in and was not in existence to experience. Moreover, the eight dull-coloured vignettes that are successively revealed on-screen are all dynamic, meaning their contents are infused with the quality of movement. Each of the vignettes is delineated by a smooth transition that remains silent, and no longer includes the familiar sound of the camera click. This constitutes a minor change in the overall structure of *Salt*, but it remains worthy of investigation, as we shall see.

The filmic progression from an initial series of monochromatic still photographs, each delineated by the universally iconic sound of the camera click, to a second and final series of full colour dynamic digital-image vignettes, themselves transitioning silently from one to the next, purposefully draws the viewer's attention toward an unfolding and developing historical narrative. As technology upgrades, history marches forth. Or so it would seem. In what will follow, *Salt* offers no counterargument that suggests technology has always progressively developed, whilst its counterpart, history, has remained largely static for thousands of years. To be clear, this thesis understands that humans have historically been exploited and dominated by a powerful minority operating from within their own species. Moreover, it remains the case today. Despite the ongoing evolution of technology, humans are seemingly unable to abolish class distinctions and halt class warfare. By sticking with a clumsy philosophical conflation that coheres tasks, processes and things with people, *Salt* references the argument of the dictator and tyrant: that people are no more than tools of history. Therefore, even though history – human development in contradistinction to technological development – has been arrested everywhere for centuries, *Salt's* creators have selected to focus exclusively on Russians and their own history. In doing so, *Salt* presents a stylised form of argumentation that marshals accusation and exaggeration to its service. *Salt* absorbs the “paranoid style” of historical analysis into its narrative scope, ardently claiming that, as Russian history surges forth, Russians are progressively upgrading their tactical weaponry, which will be solely and overwhelmingly used “to destroy America.”¹

Russian motives for such outrageous public conduct remain unexplored by *Salt*, just as cause and effect are disregarded and forgotten. Indeed, the world history that occupies the filmic space of *Salt* is a sham. Russians do not universally hate Americans. Nor is the Russian state attempting to

¹ Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style and Other Essays*, 3-40.

saturate the United States with highly indoctrinated or brainwashed Russian citizens, who after emigrating to the new country, will wait patiently, sometimes for years, for their foreign-sourced orders to arrive. Furthermore, due to the fact that *Salt* is not a documentary, or any kind of authoritative source of historical knowledge, *Salt* has few constraints upon its narrative or mode of expression. *Salt* is a work of fiction and is therefore not bound by the ethical or methodological conventions of scholarly history. Understood in the very broadest sense, *Salt* can make any claims it desires to. *Salt* can also promulgate any suggestion, no matter how inaccurate or irresponsible, without recourse to historical fact. However, *Salt* overtly marshals the historical artefact to its cause. *Salt* suborns the monochromatic photograph to its own narrative, discarding alternate narratives, including the official US government account documented in the Warren Report. Furthermore, *Salt* seeks to emulate the full-colour Soviet production, *Young Pioneers*. In doing so, *Salt* utilises the short film as template, in turn, transforming the historical artefact into an empty vessel. The team behind *Salt* have inserted an alternate narrative into this lacuna. Although the conventions of scholarly historical research may not hold fast in the world of Hollywood, the consistent custom and practice of filmmakers applying a disclaimer to their creative works remains common. *Salt* has published no disclaimer.

Finally, it is worth reiterating that *Salt* sits within a wider body of American creative works. The Cold War film has been a Hollywood constant ever since *The Iron Curtain* was publicly released in 1948. Even today, a decade after *Salt's* initial release in 2010, *Salt* remains a highly polished exemplar of the American cultural reaction to the existence of the Cold War. Thus, *Salt* encapsulates a cultural perspective and approach towards US-Russian relations that has a lengthy history. Due to this, serious examination of *Salt* can offer a generous insight into the mindset of its creators and producers.

4.1 THE COLOUR VIGNETTES

In the first colour vignette, we observe a mass of uniformed children from the navel-line and upward: they smile innocently and with their arms in the air they clap overhead in unison. Each is dressed in a white long-sleeve shirt, a “red pioneer tie”² which has been cinched below the chin by a single knot, and a pilotka in matching red hue. The young children have been arranged in school-assembly-muster-grid-formation. Two of the children are in sharper focus than the others; the one in the foreground is adorned with two red and gold badges worn on the front pocket; behind him, another displays a lone badge in similar fashion. No other colours are worn. This is a close approximation of the uniform of the *Young Pioneer Organisation of the Soviet Union*, which operated between the years 1922 and 1991.³

In the second, two children, once again, appear in the foreground standing before a bank of five microphones. Other children can be identified behind them, filling the background. The colour of the shirts of the two kids in the foreground is now seemingly a light beige. Conversely, the shirts worn in the background absorb no such change. A lone adult male can be observed standing to the children’s left (right screen), where he remains slightly out of focus, although a badge as described previously can be identified on the left lapel of his suit jacket. During this vignette, the children enact a salute. With the right arm bent at the elbow, the hand is raised to the forehead, thumb just in front of the third-eye region and the palm facing toward the left-hand side. It is the salute employed by the *Young Pioneer Organisation of the Soviet Union*.

Within their own film production discussed above, the *Young Pioneers* state: “... the prime concern of the Pioneers, and of all children, is to learn, learn and learn.”⁴ And, “Our goal is to create the

² *Young Pioneers of the Soviet Union* (1978), [2:40].

³ “Vasily Kafo Old Photo,” *Sergei Ilitsky Photography*. Accessed February 4, 2020. Exhibit details.

⁴ *Young Pioneers of the Soviet Union* (1978), [3:03].

conditions for the development of children's physical and mental strength."⁵ Furthermore, although there is a renewed Russian interest in the *Young Pioneers*, evidenced in the May 2019 parade in Red Square, Moscow, this is not exactly the same organisation that was disbanded in 1991.⁶ Also, at the time of *Salt's* public release in 2010, the *Young Pioneer Organisation of the Soviet Union* had been defunct for nearly twenty years. Therefore, although *Salt* remains a work of fictional narrative, it indisputably relies upon actual and simulated historical artefacts.

To reiterate, the actual can be accounted for by the monochromatic photographs of the life and habits of Lee Harvey Oswald and the assassination of US President John Fitzgerald Kennedy. The close re-production of the *Young Pioneers* short film accounts for the mimesis. Both (original and reprinted) black and white photographs and original colour Soviet film possess or contain historical narratives of their own. Walter Benjamin identifies these uniquely attached narratives as "aura."⁷ *Salt*, in borrowing these various histories, trades upon the past in a manner similar to the museum curator. Moreover, in placing the photographs and *Young Pioneers* into sequence and set – which is read by the viewer as similar to side-by-side within the museum – the mechanics of *Salt* produce a relationship between the two that otherwise would not exist. This visual (physical) placement can be understood as an historical relationship – as cause and effect – and matches what both Sergei Eisenstein and Roland Barthes identify as "third meaning."⁸

⁵ *Young Pioneers of the Soviet Union* (1978), [4:23].

⁶ "Sergei Ilnitsky," *European Pressphoto Agency*. Accessed February 4, 2020.

⁷ Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (London: Penguin, 2008). In Chapter IV, Benjamin states: "An ancient statue of Venus, for example, stood in a different traditional context with the Greeks, who made it an object of veneration, than with the clerics of the Middle Ages, who viewed it as an ominous idol. Both of them, however, were equally confronted with its uniqueness, that is, its aura."

⁸ Sergei Eisenstein, *The Film Sense* (London: Faber & Faber Limited, 1970), 17. Eisenstein identifies a "third something" that arises from the juxtaposition of images. Roland Barthes, *A Barthes Reader* (London: Jonathon Cape Ltd, 1982). Barthes essay, "The Third Meaning," further extrapolates Eisenstein's work. Barthes argues that 'this other text' (p.333) exists alongside film sound and image.

In the third, a lone child stands at a table that has been erected in the field. On its surface is some white paper, two small red and white flags, furled, with black handle grips, and a rectangular device that appears both mechanic and electronic. The device consists of two distinct parts that are centrally hinged, and it lays open in the manner of the suitcase. The child performs an operation on the device: he can be observed rewiring it. It is not clear whether the purpose of this device is that of explosion or communication. His uniform is markedly different from the uniform displayed in the two former vignettes: he wears a navy-blue long sleeve shirt and pants, seemingly constructed from durable material, with bright white belt encircling the torso over the shirt, as is commonly found in the style of military dress. The inclusion of the white belt serves to recall the final monochromatic image of Oswald observed earlier, whilst the familiar red necktie is all that remains of the uniform observed within the two previous colour vignettes. The battle dress and the field work indicate a further progression in the narrative of *Salt*: the Russians, or more accurately, their children, have breached containment. They represent an unrestrained social force, made all the more frightening by the curious absence of their parents.

In the fourth, a t-shirt clad child can be fleetingly observed operating a field radio whilst seated at a similar table. His t-shirt is cream in colour and is edged by contrasting black cuffs. There is also an indeterminate print on the t-shirt's front surface. The child wears earphones and speaks into the mouthpiece of a military-style field communications transmitter and receiver. In the fifth, two kids run downhill through a forest. They wear the same cream t-shirt as mentioned above, its black cuffs now matching the long pants and returning pilotka. They are each armed with rifle; the slightly oversized load in the arms of a child is at once both serious and absurd. The silhouette of the curvaceous gun magazine further informs the viewer of the presence of the semi-automatic repeating rifle. As the kids tear downhill, with machine-guns resting on the horizontal plane, the upright trees add contrast by adhering to the vertical plane. This particular mismatch serves to

visually separate both, creating an effect that is pleasing to the human eye, which was first deployed magnificently by director Sergei Eisenstein in his film *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). The clash and contrast between the horizontal and vertical can be readily observed in 'Part V: Odessa Steps' of the same film; and, was subsequently re-interpreted by Hollywood in *The Untouchables* (1987). Somewhat ironically, Eisenstein was one of the original Russian master-filmmakers and is largely credited with inventing the montage sequence. Both *Salt* and *The Untouchables* have refused to acknowledge his work, without which, these two films could not exist.

In the sixth, two children appear in the foreground. They are: one boy, identified by short dark hair and one girl, similarly identified by her long blond hair, braided and hanging from her head where its tresses drape across the floor. They each lay prone on a dark blue blanket; head tilted behind the rifle-sight of what is now a different gun. It is a single-shot firearm: the famous weapon used by peasant revolutionaries. However, it is also the weapon of the army sniper. With faces contorted by the squint of aim, and shoulders braced for recoil, the kids open fire. The target remains unaccounted for. In the seventh, the screen opens onto a grassy hillock over which scores of children surge forward, most armed with semi-automatic rifles carried safely and efficiently across the chest. A child located in centre-shot bears a red flag in the manner of the historical invader horde, such as the Roman and their staff, long since abandoned by conventional warriors. Situated behind the flag-bearer is another lone adult male adorned in officer military garb, replete with epaulettes and cap with insignia. Similar to the second vignette, he is the only visually identifiable adult whose presence can be detected within the frame.

In the eighth and final vignette, which builds upon the seventh, the camera has been repositioned further away from the action. The screenshot has been widened significantly to encompass many more child soldiers who launch themselves energetically and vigorously across a large expanse of

green field. Consequently, each of the kids appears smaller on-screen. Some changes can be noted: many kids now wear a white pilotka; others are dressed completely in red; and, more red flags can be observed. The visual pace has been increased, making even freeze-frame identification and clarification somewhat difficult in this last vignette. Finally, concurrent to the speeding up of the screen image, is a similar rapid intensification in the musical score. Its short repetitive bursts, that each end on high notes before beginning anew, seemingly adds supportive emotional testimony to the visual narrative of *Salt*. The inclusion of Orlov's non-diegetic voice further enmeshes the separate filmic elements. Orlov identifies the purpose of this elaborate scheme in a single voiceover line: "Scores of agents, male and female, to be substituted for Americans!"

Salt offers no explanation regarding how Americans will be initially lured into Russia so that they may be held in captivity, whilst a replacement is located, who not only shares an outward likeness with the victim, but also has the time on hand and a residual inclination to learn the demeanour, habits and preferences of the same. No account is made of how this deeply personal and idiosyncratic information will be extracted or procured. No model is presented that describes how this process can ever be deployed, let alone repeated. In the absence of historical facts and any internal logic that would surely arise from an analysis of this gathered evidence, the narrative of *Salt* does not persuade but rather imposes. Indeed, *Salt* simply invokes the 'paranoid leap of faith' that Hofstadter so eloquently identified.⁹

4.2 BACK TO SCHOOL

The viewer is now returned to the familiar image of the remote and isolated Kremlin-like citadel. The compound and its surrounds are drenched in white snow. Although we are now observing the

⁹ Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style and Other Essays*, 37.

outpost from a different aerial perspective, there is, however, a plethora of visual detail to confirm that it is the same location as before. Within its grounds, resides the salient building that seems to emulate St. Basil's Cathedral, mentioned earlier. A series of golden onion-bulbed domes, each similarly coloured and capped with the Christian cross, adorn the various towers that emanate from the lower part of the building. The domes and crosses jointly glimmer in the bright winter sun, just as the Russian architecture recalls a bygone era. Indeed, this is an architecture that is, visually and otherwise, heavily invested in the religion of Christianity. But it is also pre-revolutionary architecture, constructed prior to the 1917 popular overthrow of the Romanov monarchy and dynasty.¹⁰ Thus, the recurring image signifies the untimely death of Christianity. Moreover, a non-diegetic soundtrack inclusive of children's classroom banter has been sutured to the screen image of this snow-covered icon, indicating its purpose. A jump cuts ensues; and, with this sudden change, the viewer is transported elsewhere within the imagined world of *Salt*. Instantaneously, the static camera lens rises upward from behind a dark surface. There is no vertical tilt in play, just a simple upward camera lift, accomplished by vertically elongating the support stand of the camera. This smooth heightening movement is accompanied by Orlov's confirmation: "At an abandoned monastery..."

Once again, the perspective of the camera serves to indicate the designated role of the viewer in relation to this imagined world. Thus, the viewer is also made to rise up, via perspectival simulation, from behind a concealment at the rear of what is now revealed to be a classroom environment. Within this universe children sit at their desks facing forward; and, the viewer is positioned behind them, observing the backs of their heads. The schoolkids are separated into two batches, located either side of the customary classroom race. A teacher stands at the far end of this liminal space;

¹⁰ Suny (ed), *The Cambridge History of Russia*, 115.

and is positioned at the front of the classroom, facing his pupils as he expounds. No sound accounts for what the teacher states. It is difficult to ascertain whether the low positioning and subsequent upward movement of the camera was solely designed to emulate a child's actions. After all, this is a simple cinematic process which may very well aim to simulate the manner in which a child, who has been hiding behind a desk for some time, swiftly reveals himself to his teacher and his classmates. However, given that the teacher offers no rebuke; and, shows no sign of relief at locating a missing pupil (or that he is even seeking to find one); and, that, the schoolkids resolutely fail to acknowledge the desired distraction that classroom mischief so often provides, one must conclude that something else entirely is occurring.

Because *Salt* necessitates the subjective engagement of the viewer via the aforementioned camerawork, a level of mutual participation or complicity is enacted between *Salt* and its audience. But it remains a bond that may not be at all desirable. Let us examine why. We pop up from behind a concealment and remain unnoticed by those which we can clearly observe. We swiftly discover ourselves in the rear of a classroom whilst class is being held. We skulk and loiter; we do not excuse ourselves and rapidly exit the space, as one may do when one feels they have suddenly and inadvertently crossed the boundary between appropriate and inappropriate. We sneak about within the exclusive space of the primary school pupil. We are engaged in espionage. Finally, we spy on these kids, with all the collective nobility and enlightenment of the peeping tom. For *Salt*, the child is not considered to be out of bounds and off limits. Rather, the child is the target, or scapegoat, within the film narrative.

Likewise, we discover that the dark barrier is actually a long desk or table, whose length fills the horizontal plane of the bottom third of the screen, and which has persisted throughout this screen take. Upon the table various childhood items have been deposited: a teddy bear, assorted action

figures, some model transportation: F-15 jet, helicopter, yellow school bus, tow truck, ute, and two-door sedan. Six board games are separately piled into two sets of three; the English-language titles of the three positioned frontward are discernible: *Operation*, *Othello*, *Connect Four*. They are quite clearly the toys and games that an American child would have knowledge of and likely access to. For Western adult viewers of *Salt*, each artefact recalls fond memories of younger and simpler days. However, within the context of *Salt*, these childhood tropes have been sinisterly repurposed. The presence of the toys and games within the classroom environment, *Salt* informs us, is not at all indicative of the playful processes of childhood social interaction and development. Rather, *Salt* insists, the kids who will utilise these items of play are actually engaged in a high-level military training operation, whereby, a simple game of *Connect Four* played between young friends can be fairly, reasonably and logically construed as the equivalent of learning the art and science of political subterfuge.

Correspondingly, the additional items laid out on the table also function as ‘empty vessels,’ into which *Salt* has poured new meaning. It is a meaning that remains contingent on the culture and nationality of the end-user. Since *Salt*’s narrative informs the viewer that Russian children are playing with these children’s toys, the viewer is enticed towards a meaning that is substantially different than if American children had been engaged similarly. This understanding is itself contingent on the framework, structure and content of *Salt*. Mindful of this, one can now consider that pushing the small yellow bus across the floor, perhaps whilst poorly imitating the sound of a genuine omnibus, or stopping to give the teddy bear a hug, because a child had dared for a moment to believe that it was possible to alter the bear’s plaintive expression, are both acts that are likely to precede an act of terrorism on American soil. Therefore, within the diegetic world of *Salt*, children cannot be identified simply as children. A filmic treatment has been applied to eradicate all childhood innocence, in a strenuous effort to suggest that young children can be viewed as enemy

combatants; and, that, the child is equal to the adult in every way, including developmentally. A fade-out to black transition concludes the scene.

Once the screen image returns, it swiftly becomes clear that the camera has been resituated. It is now positioned at the front of the classroom and is looking back, and up, at the young schoolkids. Each child has their right hand placed across their chest, above their heart, and in unison they recite the pledge of allegiance. The sound channel for the diegesis is now open and the children's recitation can be heard. An additional sound channel pipes in Orlov's voiceover, which is the more prominent of the two. According to Whitfield the only fundamental difference between the Soviet Union's Pledge of Allegiance and the United States' Pledge of Allegiance is that the American version references God. However, this was not always the case, as Whitfield makes clear: "... [al]though such a theological declaration would exclude millions of American non-believers, the president signed the pledge bill into law on Flag Day, June 14, 1954."¹¹ This may help to partly explain the emphasis on "an abandoned monastery" within *Salt's* narrative. Many American Cold Warriors consider the Russian post-revolutionary abandonment of religion, and its subsequent replacement with the Communist ideology, as the Soviet Union's, and therefore Russia's, greatest historical sin.¹²

The camera now dollies forward, rolling down the central race and between the two sections of pupils. The cinematic effect lends itself to the impression of the surge, as former is replaced by latter within the camera frame in quick succession.¹³ All are dressed in similar attire: navy blue cardigans layered over white collared shirts, both fully buttoned up; red kerchief worn around the neck with the largest section draped across the nape, its ends cinched together by a single knot that rests

¹¹ Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 89.

¹² Ibid., 77-100. Chapter 4, *Praying: God Bless America*, provides lucid insight into this phenomenon.

¹³ Slotkin, *Gunfighter Nation*, 596. Slotkin identifies a similar cinematic technique in *The Wild Bunch* (1969): "... a series of shots that suggests the forward roll of waves."

below the chin, and in opposition to the manner a Hollywood cowboy might wear his (and rarely her) own kerchief. Due to the conformist elements of matching uniform, by-rote pledge, serious expression and unblinking gaze, which have been combined dramatically with the conveyor-belt-like surge, a connection can be identified between *Salt* and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. Both films include within their respective scenarios, a highly visualised and stylised invasion of America by advancing hordes. A minor difference is that within *Invasion* the surge is overwhelming and successful, whilst within the narrative of *Salt*, the anticipated wave of intruders, who wait patiently in the background for the arrival of “Day X,” is diagnosed as more of a tactical trickle. The major difference between these two films is that *Invasion* courageously inspects and analyses American culture and life. For the creators of *Salt* such a task is anathema. Consequently, *Salt* skips over the enriching and enlightening humans united versus amoral space-alien-invader-tyrant battle-to-the-end storyline, which remains infinitely pleasing, and languidly points in the direction of Russia, striking out at the Russian schoolchild.

As mentioned, the Russian schoolkids are dressed in three colours: red, white and blue. These three colours similarly remain the only hues present within the American flag. Due to this association, the Russian schoolchildren who wear these colours could be viewed favourably. At this point, *Salt* could equate Russian children with American children and cheerfully declare all children to be fundamentally similar. Having no such interest in promoting universal harmony, *Salt* adopts a different tact. *Salt* ardently states that Russians could move abroad and live amongst Americans *as Americans*. But rather than acknowledge this as an enormous social feat of desirable human integration, where all the effort and sacrifice is made by the Russians, who in turn, make nothing of it and simply get on with life, *Salt* fearfully overreacts. Instead of smiles, handshakes and backslaps, *Salt* launches into panic-fuelled conniption, accusing successful Russian immigrants of being

‘undetectable.’ It is this deep fear of the other that motivates *Salt* and which subsequently serves as impetus for its extreme prejudice.

To complete this scene, which this essay initially identified only in part: “At an abandoned monastery...” Orlov similarly completes his articulation: “... Chenkov and other boys learned English long before they learned Russian.” Precisely on the final spoken word, “Russian,” a jump cut returns the viewer to a close-up of Orlov’s face as he recounts. It is an editing strategy that communicates an indictment against Orlov, and by extension, all Russians. Orlov then adds: “Drilled in idiom...”

A further jump cut retrieves the classroom environment that was momentarily displaced by Orlov’s prominent face. A television now assumes the central position within both the diegesis and the screen. Although the cathode ray tube is located in the background, it continues to loom large within the overall screen composition. The teacher sits to the right (left screen) and slightly in front of the television, in mid-ground, and does not obstruct the view of its dynamic content. He sits on the floor with legs crossed, and the schoolkids sit facing him and emulate his manner. Arranged into two rows, the pupils largely constitute the foreground. The arrangement and composition inform us that what we are observing is essentially a portrait. The inclusion of the riding crop, which appears to touch the perimeter of the background, before stretching across the mid-ground to reach its point of rest within the foreground, provides a visual and metaphorical link between the three planes. Its action, as described, maintains the nod to art history.

Crucially, the riding crop, with one end that stands on the floor and another which leans against the bottom horizontal edge of the television set, instantiates an additional emphasis via its trophy-like status within the portrait. Treated to an astounding reverence that emulates the similar treatment of the red and gold ring, the riding-crop-serving-as-indicator is here deployed to reiterate its earlier

action. In doing this, however, the riding crop will also reinforce its metaphorical meaning. To analyse the visual metaphor of the riding crop, we must briefly explore its action within *Salt*. Firstly, we have observed the teacher make exclusive use of the hand-held indicator, and therefore, it can belong to no one else. Secondly, when we have observed the hand-held indicator in use, it has been used solely to identify an object of study. Finally, the riding crop points toward the television and its dynamic content, indicating that the teacher's intent is to enunciate on the same. Now that we understand the action of the riding crop, we can explore its purpose.

Within this portrait, or single screen shot, the presence of the riding crop confirms, for the viewer, that, the dynamic televisual content is solely an object of study. Consequently, *The Brady Bunch* (1969-74), which accounts fully for this televisual material, is here presented as something other than what many of us living in the West would perceive it to be. Astonishingly, the unfolding content of the American family drama is not (narratively) framed within the realm of light entertainment and mild distraction. Instead, *Salt* uproots and disconnects *The Brady Bunch* from its cultural contextuality, before transplanting and inserting the same into a new context, which in turn, infuses new meaning into the television programme. Thus, *The Brady Bunch*, within the diegesis of *Salt*, is an object of study similar to the museum exhibit. Its flickering presence, reinforced by the incriminating riding crop, survives to manifest the impression that Russian children attending school cannot or will not, naturally or voluntarily, engage with the most trivial and bland aspects of American cultural life.

Building upon this unfounded assertion, *Salt* argues, that, Russians are so dimly aware of the Western universe, that they each must receive formal instruction in such a taken for granted Western cultural experience, as that of observing the somewhat mushy storylines and predictable outcomes of *The Brady Bunch*. Extrapolating this point, Russians are quite literally being presented

as culturally backward and intellectually dense. Unperturbed and relentless, *Salt* continues to unfurl its well-planned and self-conscious attack upon the Russian people. If Russians undoubtedly require such a rudimentary introduction into American culture, *Salt* reasons, then the same Russians are unnatural and therefore alien. Indeed, something exclusively intrinsic to the Russian is what is holding all of them back in life. Equally, this discrete quality of the Russian is precisely what constitutes an existential threat to the American way of life. Therefore, within the logic of *Salt*, the Russian is so fundamentally different from the American, that genetics may have to be examined to determine the exact nature of the chasm that separates the two.

As one line of kids sits behind the other, they are attentive and receptive to the teacher and his words; and, miraculously they do not fidget at all. The camera is again positioned behind the children, ensuring the viewer remains the big kid at the back of the classroom. Orlov's voiceover continues: "... idiosyncrasy..." The teacher is also, once again, expounding, but his words, which he shares with his young charges, are once again withheld from the viewer. In exploring this action of *Salt*, the camera is apparently concealed behind an invisible sheet of soundproof diaphanous glass. No sound is permitted to pass through this barrier. Only optics are allowed safe passage to reach the viewer's senses. Indeed, if the viewer was actually present in the classroom, they would be capable of hearing the teacher's commentary and the children's responses. In using this mode of detached inspection, the subjective viewpoint becomes one of muted indifference. The viewer is encouraged to assume that whatever happens to these children, it is somehow preordained, or otherwise out of our control, and therefore, it is useless to empathise or consider alternatives. The screen then returns to the face of Orlov via the jump cut, who, after an uncharacteristic dramatic pause, throatily states: "... and ideology."

As mentioned, emblazoned upon the television screen is the opening sequence of the popular and long-running prime time show, *The Brady Bunch*. Its iconic tic-tac-toe curtain raiser, filling each of the nine squares with a character's visage in quick succession, is a masterpiece of high-quality discrete branding. Once you've seen it, you are unlikely to forget it. *The Brady Bunch* consists of a narrative that matches two single parents, a single father with three boys and a single mother with three girls and reconstitutes them into an American family. Living in an upmarket two-storey family home that includes a spacious but often dimly lit architect den, the reconstructed family of eight encounter mildly intriguing scenarios five days a week. Gaining three kids seemingly did not dent either parent's ability to finance the cost of living and may have, quite unrealistically, improved their financial status. So much so, that the combined household could now afford to hire Alice, the cook and cleaner, who also plays the agony aunt and provides light comic relief within the narrative. To cap it off, everyone is white, including Alice's sometime boyfriend, Sam the Butcher.

That it should appear within the diegesis of *Salt* is intriguing. Its presence very likely indicates that the producers of *Salt* considered *The Brady Bunch* to be the best visual representation of the apogee of American social and cultural life. So much so, the producers may have assumed, that Russians would find its contents desirable and therefore worthy of emulation. One may wonder if Maria Butina ever accessed an opportunity to catch an episode of *The Brady Bunch*, before embarking on her journey to America. In any case, Butina would soon discover that there exists in the US a stark dissimilarity between televisual fiction and actual lived reality. Her harsh sentence and cruel imprisonment, ostensibly for failing to complete and submit paperwork, but far more likely simply for being a Russian national situated in America during a time of internal domestic crisis, remains testament to that.¹⁴

¹⁴ Cohen, *War with Russia?*, 203.

Furthermore, despite the overt attempt to elicit an identification with the position of the child, the voiceover reminds the viewer that it is precisely these children who will arrive in America and seek its destruction. Seemingly, once these child immigrants have settled Stateside, they will behave just as Oswald had behaved, or was assumed to have behaved. Therefore, if films make philosophical and political statements, and this thesis contends that that is precisely the case, then the statement made herein is thus: Americans naturally love all children, however, Russian children are not natural, but manufactured, and hence can be treated as if they are not human children at all. Indeed, *Salt* dehumanises the child due to its cultural and regional origin. In light of this, the Russian child has been denied the innocence that all the world's children are ordinarily assumed to possess.

The board games described earlier may very well be perceived by the viewer as evidentiary artefacts, whereby each item constitutes a searing indictment against one or more Russian children. Consequently, the table that has seemingly collated these artefacts for exposition performs the role of prosecutor. The viewer is indeed judge and jury, but what of the defence? Within the diegesis of *Salt*, no one speaks for these children. And why should they, given that these children exist as variations on the theme of the conformist: the robot, drone, space-alien and zombie. As one can by now see, once the humanising element is removed from the filmic character, acts that may reasonably be considered to be inappropriate and unpermitted become quite acceptable, because the robot, drone, space-alien and zombie must either do as we wish or be eliminated. Ronnie Lipschutz explains the background to this scenario: "During the 1950s, ... [Cold War] themes emerged in three forms, the first focused on crime, the second on atomic radiation, the third on possession by communist ideas."¹⁵ This is a diligent observation that is further clarified by Sayre:

¹⁵ Lipschutz, *Cold War Fantasies*, 37.

Humanoids can look just like the rest of us, as Communists do; but they are not in charge of their own souls, and as their numbers multiply, everyone will become alike. (In the Fifties, many believed that Communist governments turned their citizens into robots). So the political forebodings of the period spilled over into science fiction, where subservience to alien powers and the loss of free will were so often depicted, and the terror of being changed into “something evil” became a ruling passion.¹⁶

It does seem that the fifties just will not go away. So much so that *Salt* can be observed to unashamedly make use of derogatory cinematic tropes that have their origins in the first Cold War (1945-1991).

Therefore, *Salt* requires its audience to delineate and differentiate between Russians and Americans: not on the basis of culture and nationality, but on the basis of humanity. Moreover, *Salt* makes this demand by asserting (stylistically and narratively) that Russians are lesser persons and quite possibly subhuman. To construct this argument within the constraints of a film, *Salt* must overturn the notion of the universal child. Once enacted, some kids have rights, some have entitlements, and some must simply ‘wait their turn.’ It is in the vicinity of ‘waiting their turn’ that *Salt* situates Russian children. In the absence of the objective concept of the universal child, any legal and moral rights the child may possess swiftly become subjective and fragile. To accomplish this philosophical transition, where the rights of the child are displaced, and a void is made manifest, which can later be subject to filling, a debasement must necessarily occur. Accordingly, a Russian

¹⁶ Sayre, *Running Time: Films of the Cold War*, 200-201.

child is made dissimilar to any other child; and, a Russian boy or girl is transmogrified into an other. Without this debasement of the child, *Salt* is rendered meaningless.¹⁷

4.3 THE FINAL PHASE OF INDOCTRINATION

“Drilled in idiom, idiosyncrasy and [*dramatic pause*] ideology” is stated just as the familiar one-by-one tic-tac-toe formation of the introduction to *The Brady Bunch* completes itself. A jump cut then ensues, and a fist appears on-screen: whereupon a single finger is decorated with a red and gold ring. Small hands appear to clasp the one large fist and manoeuvre it slightly upward. The rear of a child’s head flashes in and out of shot. The sound of lips smacking is audible; a kiss is suggested but remains concealed off-screen. This is repeated with the next child. At this brief point, one can only sense that the ring is being kissed, which is confirmed when the next screen shot appears. Another jump cut produces a new perspective: the upper legs and lower torso of an adult standing upright behind a right arm, upon which is attached the fist and ring. The children have now been brought into focus; and, they stand in a row and form a queue. The lead child steps forth and confirms the audience’s suspicions: the large fist is again clasped and this time around we observe the ring being kissed. Another child acts similarly before another jump cut occurs, situating the camera behind the body of the ring-wearer. Three more children approach the fist, clasp it, and kiss the ring. Orlov’s disembodied voiceover illuminates: “And by methods of rigorous physical and psychological training ... a spymaster made warriors of iron ... unquestioning and unbreakable.”

An orchestral soundtrack reaches a climactic moment as a final jump cut discloses an image of the teacher’s face, which has been absent up until this point. The camera is positioned at a low angle, causing the teacher to stare down his nose into the lens, and by extension, at the viewer. It is not

¹⁷ “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” *United Nations*. Accessed January 30, 2020. “All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.”

the mighty and lofty “bald eagle look” as described by Whitfield in relation to the Secretary of State, Dulles. “Television and film cameramen were often encouraged on these occasions to shoot their peripatetic subject from a low angle, giving Dulles a redoubtable “American eagle look.””¹⁸ Rather, the low camera angle that peers up into the teacher’s nostrils encapsulates both image and sense of megalomania. This effect is achieved by use of the familiar motif of film noir, in which a protagonist is made to appear mad or crazy by framing them from low and sometimes skewed camera angles.¹⁹

These four screen shots, which are sutured together via jump cut, constitute the ending of the flashback narrative. Importantly, throughout the first three of these screen shots, the teacher is decapitated. Indeed, his head and face have been made absent within the frame, which in turn, places an emphasis on the ring itself and the children who now must step forth to worship the hand ornament. The face of the child at the head of the queue can be observed, in stark contrast to the missing head and face of the teacher. As this lead child steps forth, from mid-ground into foreground, the face and body of another child is revealed just as they assume the place of the former. Upon arrival alongside the teacher, the child submissively clasps the former’s hand, and with a gaze that remains firmly fixed upon the red and gold ring, leans forward to place a single kiss upon the ornament. The child then exits the frame, and is once again replaced by another, who acts similarly. Here, *Salt* simply persists with the theme of the surge or wave, using the familiar trope of the queue to depict and dramatize its function. But this function can also be observed in the *Pez* dispenser, which itself draws upon the rifle magazine. *Salt* is informing the viewer that these Russian children are being fired at America.

¹⁸ Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 157.

¹⁹ Robert Porfirio in Mark T. Conrad (ed), *The Philosophy of Film Noir* (USA: University of Kentucky Press, 2007), xii. “[an] atmosphere of fear and paranoia ... pervades film noir.”

The successive kisses infer a certain intimate devotion between the children and the teacher. The scene unmistakably evokes a sense of pride and dedication towards the same, but the scene also expresses a commitment to a conceptual framework. To this end, the ring is given a special treatment within *Salt*, made explicit in this scene by the removal of the wearer's head and face from within the frame. This action serves to place emphasis and meaning onto the ring, which, once separated from the universe of human adornment and its associated vanity, is transformed into a vital symbol or sign within the diegesis. The visual narrative of *Salt* never truly accepts the ring as an ordinary piece of jewellery: which is to say, the ring is never simply metonym alone (a ring), but also a persistent and recurring metaphor. Ryan and Kellner clarify: "A metaphoric representation is one which replaces a real version of events or an accurate account of social reality with an elevated ideal."²⁰ And, "Ideology ... is primarily a metaphoric way of representing the world that is linked to a particular way of constructing social reality. A metaphor replaces an image with an ideal or higher meaning."²¹

The ring represents the ideology of Russian Communism and Atheism, and all the simple and complex narratives that these words – ironically, expressed within *Salt* without recourse to written and spoken language - may elicit in the viewer. Moreover, the repeated act of kissing the ring, which occurs seven times, serves to reinforce a very specific point. To understand this, the nature of the ring must be examined. Whilst the ring remains the focal point of the scene, a status it achieves through its stubborn refusal to exit the frame, many children pass through the same mis-en-scene. This establishes a contradiction between static and solidly present on the one hand and mobile and fleeting on the other. Seen in this light, the children appear dispensable, as indeed they are, as each disappears from frame never to return.

²⁰ Ryan and Kellner, *Camera Politica*, 18-19.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

Similarly, the ring, whose obstinate stay affirms all that it stands in for, remains crucial, integral and indispensable. Thus, the ring as metaphor identifies all that cannot be made absent without upheaval. In this instance, the ring indicates the power of the Soviet class and military hierarchy over and above the Russian people. Whom, as we have seen, are brainwashed as children so that they are made devoid of moral conscience and individuality, and therefore, will strike out violently at America and Americans for no good reason, or for no reason at all. Finally, the ring is worn on a hand which is attached to an arm, which not only stands in for the teacher-leader but is also a synecdoche for the country and nation of Russia. In the overall schematics of the film, *Salt* spends little time in Russia, and therefore offers no comparisons that would allow the viewer to determine with some accuracy whether this really is the state of play within Russia. *Salt* simply pushes forth with its unrelenting, unreflective rhetoric.

In sum, *Salt* enacts a shift from the monochromatic to the polychromatic to indicate a shift in time. The particularity of the colour palette strongly resembles an earlier Russian production. *Salt* includes a treatment of the Russian child that suggests children are equivalent to adults. This cinematic device also re-presents the Russian child as the threatening other. Taken together, *Salt's* proposition is that Russian children are legitimate targets in the Cold War. Finally, the ring indicates an invisible and omnipotent authority that these brainwashed (soulless) children are prepared to die for.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has demonstrated how a single film - *Salt* - uses history to make an argument. This thesis has identified, examined and analysed the historical source materials that *Salt* has so readily deployed to make its own case. At the same time, the thesis has included extensive analysis of the techniques employed by *Salt* to convey this same case to the viewing audience.

Within this thesis, we have drawn upon a wide range of films for comparative purposes, many of which has been imbued with similar Cold War themes. We have observed how this particular historical cameo actually employs a series of technical feats to bolster and aid its argument through appealing to our collective senses. The audience is manipulated to feel sensations, which includes the fear for a child's safety, the unpleasant feeling of overwhelm, and the sense of confusion and disorientation that the loss of individual control brings to oneself. Alongside this, the same filmic techniques serve to recall memories that reference events and other materials that remain firmly outside of the diegesis. The most prominent of these is the JFK assassination, which remains indisputably ingrained within the American popular psyche, in an open-ended and unresolved fashion. This lack of historical certainty and finality is a portal through which *Salt* operates with great skill.

We have understood that this very brief film-with-a-film, which adopts the pictorial mode of the photographic essay and narrative mode of the flashback, is a striking attempt to present historical events in a quite specific light. *Salt* undoubtedly encompasses a reconstructed past that seeks to explain or justify a narrow perspective of the Cold War. That any film should launch and sustain an attack upon the Russian child due to their birthplace and culture alone is disturbing.

Furthermore, *Salt's* world view is not dissimilar to the American cultural perspective that can be found in the many films suffused with a Cold War rhetoric which arrive later, such as *Red Sparrow* (2018). In this manner, *Salt* may also serve as antecedent (or prequel) to *Red Sparrow*, alongside *The Double*, which we have already discussed. Indeed, *Salt's* children must grow up as all children do. Some may then attend the University that *Red Sparrow* richly describes. Afterward, the successful graduates can then infiltrate the FBI, as further described within the narrative of *The Double*.

A rubric consisting of four distinct considerations was identified within the introduction. In response, it must be stated, that:

Firstly, *Salt* is a historical work of art that is not a book. The historical account contained within *Salt* does not rely solely upon the history of literature but additionally relies upon the history of art to express and convey its narrative. This has been shown to occur wherever *Salt* has utilised the many arrested images marshalled to its cause. Each photographic artefact contains multiple elements whose own action is to transfer data and knowledge in a manner that is simultaneous (space-based) rather than consecutive (time-based). Complicating this are the many instances of screen narrative highlighted above, themselves formulated from style and technique, each of which demonstrates that the history lesson provided by *Salt* greatly exceeds the constraints of the book. Moreover, this historical contradiction between literature and art has today largely been absorbed by the film. Bringing literature and art together, although not always harmoniously so, film in no way displaces the former two, but quite simply and pleasingly extends and enlarges the cultural pool from which we can all draw intellectual and moral sustenance.

Salt may offer much less here in terms of personal upliftment and historical enlightenment. However, that is not to declare that *Salt* is no longer an historical work of art. This thesis maintains that *Salt* is indeed an historical work of art that is not at all dissimilar to some historical publications, whose own foundations are quite shaky and unstable. The editorial choice to leave the film-with-a-film uncredited coupled with the absence of historical referencing assist to illustrate a tenuous platform.

Critics of this thesis will likely argue that a film such as *Salt* is not intended as a work of historical scholarship. This may be true and correct. However, as I have carefully laid out within this thesis, *Salt* clearly masquerades as such. In assuming this appearance, which is as technologically sophisticated as it is financially costly, *Salt* foregoes any opportunity to conceal itself as mere blithe entertainment. The engagement of a former CIA operative as Technical Advisor and a serving member of the US Secret Service as consultants on the set of *Salt* also lends additional weight to my argument that *Salt* is much more than an engaging story of escapist fiction.

Indeed, *Salt* delivers a compelling ensemble of vision, sound, dialogue and cinematic grammar, all of which coalesce to form a film whose subject matter is the history of the Cold War. Moreover, *Salt's* absolute inability to conform to even the most rudimentary ethics of the role and job of the historian is precisely what fills *Salt* with such enormous value: its deconstruction unearths an abundance of materials from which the ethical historian can eagerly begin their work. Finally, *Salt* remains a cultural artefact that can demonstrate the value of using film to highlight cultural values within certain places and at certain times.

Secondly, *Salt's* lesson in history is contrived. *Salt* derives its historical lesson from existing historical narratives which have been subsequently altered to suit. *Salt* achieves this by employing a cinematic

device that initially borrows from the cultural museum before manipulating the aura and narrative of the borrowed artefact. Two such instances are recalled: firstly, the photographic materials relating to the Kennedy assassination, at least one of which was subsequently altered and edited. Secondly, the process of colourisation, deployed to make *Salt* closely approximate or otherwise match the technological history present within the *Young Pioneers* film.

Furthermore, *Salt* crafts its narrative from a highly vivid and paranoid imagination. As we have seen, *Salt's* plot narrative performs an assessment that identifies Russian children as highly indoctrinated potential assassins. *Salt's* screen narrative further corroborates this assertion through a highly suggestive process that seeks to persuade and influence the viewer at the level of emotion and psychology. And in skilfully blending these two together, *Salt* deploys the photographic materials identified above in a bold attempt to align both the interests and behaviour of these same Russian children with the American adult assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald.

Thirdly, that similar to a book, a film may also be read and understood; and finally, the methodology of communication within *Salt* is the product of a distinct non-verbal international language. *Salt* employs a variety of filmic techniques to convey meaning to its audience. This includes the montage sequence derived from photographic concatenation (the selective arrangement that serves to create narrative). This has been observed in the flickbook style re-presentation of the Kennedy assassination. Also, the juxtapositioning of monochromatic still photographs alongside full-colour dynamic film-based images remains highly evocative of a static past and a fluid present. When unfurled in the above sequence, the impression of historical development and progress is conveyed cinematically.

The colour section of *Salt* is noticeably dissimilar to all else within the entire full-length film. This section of the short film-within-a-film has been subjected to an editing process of colourisation that has caused *Salt* to become redolent of a bygone (technological) era. This intervention has further caused *Salt* to strongly resemble the film stock and colour palette of the 1978 Soviet production *Young Pioneers*. For those familiar with this earlier production or similar, the appearance of *Salt* may serve as aide memoir.

The imposition of the point-of-view perspective derived from camera technique during filming elicited a sense of audience participation. Indeed, the evocative camera techniques that involved positioning and movement were able to competently simulate the presence of a chaperone or intruder. In the former, the camera is positioned behind the head of Anya to allow the viewer the psychological distance that would not exist if shot-reverse shot had been employed. In the latter, a camera travels vertically – from darkness into clarity – and cinematically places the viewer within the classroom. Due to the manner of arrival, the viewer is aware of the lack of invitation into this space. The viewer is also made aware that those present within this space – teacher and young pupils – are not aware of the viewer intrusion. An additional camera technique related to framing conceals, through cropping and deleting, the full details contained within the photograph. This change serves to reposition our understanding of Lee Harvey Oswald and the surrounding events. This change also furthers the narrative of *Salt*.

These film conventions (film grammar) are communication techniques and methodologies that exist apart from, and in addition to, the written and spoken language, and hand-sign language, that the human species widely and commonly share, interact with, and understand. Film grammar is therefore a distinct non-verbal international language, which similar to a book, may also be accessed and understood by a reader, viewer or listener.

Finally, *Salt* exists within a cultural canon of Hollywood productions that have similarly sought to represent the Cold War. It is an extensive body of work, taking clear shape from 1948. Over these seventy-two years the Hollywood trope of the Russian has been firmly established and many times reiterated. These cinematically recurring themes have included the Russian as alien, non-human or subhuman, invader, threatening other, super-criminal or terrorist. In contrast, there has been marginal ground set aside for the Hollywood Russian to be portrayed as decent, moral, lawful and fair-minded. The consistent recycling of these themes by Hollywood very likely indicates the presence of an American cultural preoccupation. This includes what Slotkin identifies as the American cultural preference to always have an enemy and the American cultural notion that personal and political regeneration can only occur subsequent to an act of severe violence. This further includes locating the quality of “enemy-ness,” as described by Engelhardt, within the Russian character.²² Accordingly, a theme of victimisation persists within *Salt*, just as it does within many of the Hollywood films analysed herein. These films inform us that Americans have been subjected to an overt or covert attack, to which they are compelled to respond. An American cultural preoccupation with adopting the role of victim is precisely what Hofstadter describes as “The Paranoid Style in American Politics.”²³

²² Engelhardt, *The End of Victory Culture*, 129.

²³ Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style and Other Essays*, 3-40.

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