Surveillance & Society

Article

# The I's of the Informant: Memoirs of Surveillance Society

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## Abstract

The informant is both a controversial medium of security and a maligned cultural figure. Their actions and stories about their actions are integral nodes in the economy of fear that structures surveillance society. This paper examines how Cold War and war on terror informants tell stories about themselves (Budenz 1947; Speckhard and Shaikh 2014) against the backdrop of a "fear of small numbers" (Appadurai 2006) on the home front. The overlapping intentions (confession, memoir, apology) and I's (narrated, narrating, and ideological) in their memoirs provide an entry point for assessing how informants assert their authority and how they reproduce the security cultures in which they find themselves. Each memoir draws on ideological pairings central to discourses of infiltration and radicalization, respectively. The authors confess to having been the duped or radicalized westerner but narrate from the position of the patriotic Catholic or "good Muslim." Ultimately, I argue that the narrative and ideological climax of the memoirs lies in how the transformation from enemy to friend is presented: as the result of a chance encounter. This shifts the fear of small numbers from the one amongst us who might become a traitor to the slim and incalculable probability through which one returns from extremism, which is by definition less than one. Marked as the exception, the narrative reinforces the necessity of the informant in security practices.

## Introduction

Louis F. Budenz (1891–1972) was a well-known labor organizer who was arrested multiple times for his advocacy work. He joined the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) in 1935 and later became the editor of *The Daily Worker*. He publicly left the Party in 1945, rejoined the Catholic Church, and became a vocal anti-Communist. As a "professional witness," he testified at trials of suspected and known Communists (Navasky 1980). He was essential to the 1949 conviction of eleven CPUSA leaders. Mubin Shaikh (b. 1975) is a Canadian who, in 2004, volunteered to work for the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS). While Shaikh was never a member or operative of a terrorist group, he identifies as a former extremist and Taliban sympathizer who "used to agree with blowing up the West" (Speckhard and Shaikh 2014: 110). He was integral to the arrest and conviction of the Toronto 18, a group of men and minors (boys) convicted of plotting a terrorist attack in Canada. The group had supposedly wanted to bomb various targets, storm the Canadian Parliament, and behead the prime minister. One of the ringleaders, Zakaria Amara, had his citizenship revoked (The Canadian Press 2015). At the same time, seven of the participants had their sentences stayed or dismissed. Shaikh was paid for his work and has since become a semi-regular talking head on news networks in the US and Canada. Both men wrote memoirs about their experiences.

This paper examines informant memoirs as nodes within the "productive economy of fear" integral to surveillance society (Crandall and Armitage 2005). An analysis of how informants present themselves and their work to the general public and more specific audiences does not reveal the "truth" of informant work.

Szpunar, Piotr M. 2020. The I's of the Informant: Memoirs of Surveillance Society. *Surveillance & Society* 18(4): 481-492.
https://ojs.library.queensu.ca/index.php/surveillance-and-society/index | ISSN: 1477-7487
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Rather, it provides an entry point for a more nuanced understanding of the discursive and ideological parameters that make the informant an indispensable tool of security. The paper proceeds in two parts. First, I outline the function of the informant in surveillance society both as a medium of surveillance and as a cultural figure; these two functions meet in the informant memoir. I place particular focus on the work of the informant in the context of the home front where a ubiquitous enemy threatens to manifest in westerners, in other words, against a security backdrop organized around a "fear of small numbers" (Appadurai 2006) and linear theories of radicalization that posit innumerable inroads to extremism with few offramps.

Second, I analyze the memoirs of Budenz (1947) and Shaikh (Speckhard and Shaikh 2014) with a focus on the shifting and overlapping intentions—confession, memoir, apology (Hart 1970)—and I's—narrated, narrating, ideological (Smith and Watson 2001)—therein. The combination provides a useful rubric for examining how the authors reproduce and utilize key ideological figures of their given epochs. Each confesses to being duped or radicalized (the narrated I's), the result of an identity crisis and a wayward attempt to resolve it. The narrating I of each memoir situates the authors within their historical contexts; they write as a patriotic Catholic and "good Muslim," respectively. Against the backdrop of linear theories that posit few ways out of the extremist pipeline, the climax of each narrative is the transformation of the narrated I into the narrating I, enemy into friend. These returns are presented as the result of a chance encounter; the fear of small numbers here centers not on which one (1) becomes a traitor but on the slim and perhaps incalculable probability through which one returns from extremism, which is by definition less than one (< 1). Ultimately, the narrated transformation from enemy to friend without the intervention of authorities is not intended to signal a limit to the supposed potency of a ubiquitous enemy lurking on the home front. Rather, marked as the exception, it supports the informant's claim to authority and, more generally, reinforces the informant as an indispensable medium of surveillance.

## Informants in Surveillance Societies

The informant is a technology of surveillance as old as political power. In ancient Greece and Rome, informants were deployed in cases of potential treason and subversion (Bloom 2002). Despite the more institutionalized use of informants against a broader range of criminal activities that began with the professionalization of police forces in nineteenth-century Europe (Bloom 2002; Hewitt 2010), the informant remains a key instrument for maintaining state power by monitoring and disrupting movements that challenge the status quo (Brodeur 2007; Hewitt 2010; Marx 1974). In this context, the work of the informant is rarely uncontroversial; their deployment is often motivated by racial community profiling and marred by allegations of entrapment. These controversies are elided by a definition that equates "informant" to "supplier of information" (Bloom 2002: 1) and a characterization, like that of the New York Police Department, that reduces the informant to a "listening post" (Apuzzo and Goldman 2013). Situating the informant within surveillance society as both a surveillance medium and cultural figure provides a more complex account of the informant's function within a productive economy of fear.

The Cold War and war on terror security cultures are certainly different, structured around notions of deterrence and preemption, respectively (Massumi 2015). The surveillance practices of the former utilized paper and electronics, while those of the latter are best characterized as *dataveillance* (Amoore and de Goede 2005; van Dijck 2014). Yet, the informant continues to play a key role. Reeves' (2017: 10) observation on the persistence of government-initiated citizen surveillance programs is applicable to the informant: "the seeing/saying human subject is endowed with unique intelligence-gathering potential that allows it to complement and enrich purely technical forms of data collection and analysis." While the informant plays this role in various arenas, I focus on one specific context: the home front.

Both the Cold War and war on terror security paradigms are partially organized around the idea that a ubiquitous enemy necessitates action within one's own borders (Reeves 2017; Szpunar 2018). This is a particular instantiation of Appadurai's (2006) fear of small numbers: a foreign enemy threatens to fool, hypnotize, or brainwash an American into action on its behalf. The rarity of such occurrences only intensifies the fear—the uncertainty of where and in whom a threat will emerge —as do linear theories of

radicalization that posit innumerable inroads to extremism but few offramps (see King and Taylor 2011; Patel 2011). What is called radicalization today was expressed as "infiltration" throughout the Cold War. The House Committee on Un-American Activities sought to out Communists hiding in Hollywood, minority groups, educational institutions, unions, and so on. In the war on terror, the latest iteration of this fear is the "homegrown" terrorist, who is distinct from the domestic terrorist in that she undertakes violence to further the goals of a "foreign" (i.e., jihadist) terrorist organization while working without direction from said organization (Department of Homeland Security 2011). The homegrown threat, one government officials publicly claim has no profile (Napolitano 2010), represents those "circuits—or people—[within the network] that are unreliable and untrustworthy" (Hu 2015: 18). The surveillance function of the informant in this context is complex; three points are worth addressing in detail.

First, informants are certainly part and parcel of "social sorting" (Lyon 2003); they are tasked with flushing out the enemy hiding in plain sight. But despite the rhetoric of a threat without profile, the informant is always deployed against subgroups considered suspicious or susceptible, those marked as other (Bechrouri 2018; Hewitt 2010; Kamali 2017; Marx 1974). Not only is the racial basis of war on terror security thinking well documented (Volpp 2002), but the notion of radicalization is also, at its core, racialized (Kundnani 2012). Indeed, Muslim- and Arab-American communities are disproportionately subjected to both state and citizen surveillance (Bayoumi 2015; Cainkar 2009; Selod 2018). The sorting function of the informant in this regard is evident in patterns of deployment. In the late 1940s, the "FBI had 1000 informants focused on the CPUSA," and, by the early 1960s, "17% of CPUSA paid membership were Hoover's men" (Hewitt 2010: 52). Today, Aaronson (2013) sets the number of FBI informants at about 15,000 and estimates that up to two-thirds surveil America's Muslim communities (see also Akbar 2013; Apuzzo and Goldman 2013).

Second, the informant is, strictly speaking, neither a hierarchical nor lateral technology of surveillance (Andrejevic 2004; Reeves 2017). An informant certainly forges or exploits existing relationships—some are members of the communities or organizations they are tasked with monitoring (Bechrouri 2018). But this lateral interaction is one directed, guided, and supervised by agents of the state. And this relationship is often one in which the informant depends on the government for much needed income (Bayoumi 2015) or leniency in criminal or immigration matters (Kamali, 2017; Marx 1974). At the same time, the informant is not fully constrained. In some instances, the informant has the power to turn their surveillance accoutrements (wires and hidden cameras) off and on at will. Moreover, the informant improvises, adds carrots unsanctioned by their handlers (Szpunar 2018); the informant's improvisation can indeed "complement technical forms of data collection and analysis" (Reeves 2017: 10), but it may also jeopardize state efforts.

Third, the practice of improvisation directly challenges passive characterizations of the informant. Definitions of informant as "supplier of information" or "listening post" liken the informant to a hidden microphone, a passive channel through which information moves from targets to authorities. Conversely, the active work of the informant illustrates that the formal distinction between informant and agent provocateur, who "more assertively seeks to influence the actions taken by a group," is difficult to apply in practice; "[t]here are pressures inherent in the role that push the informant to provocation" (Marx 1974: 404–405).

While all bodies interpellated into a "seeing/saying subjectivity" (Reeves 2017) are certainly active—in where they look, how they see, what they say, and how they say it—the informant is understood differently. As Robert Mueller, while serving as the Director of the FBI, said: "Human sources… often give us critical intelligence and information we could not obtain in other ways, opening a window into our adversaries' plans and capabilities. [They] can mean the difference between the FBI preventing an act of terrorism or crime or reacting to an incident after the fact" (qtd. in Hewitt 2010: 123). That is, informants are vital for anticipating the "next terror attack" (Aradau and van Munster 2012). Similarly, in 1951, J. Edgar Hoover argued, "Authorities themselves must mobilize the law, rather than responding to the complaint of a citizen" (qtd. in Marx 1974: 434). In both paradigms, the informant is an active rather than reactive technology. Useful here is Massumi's (2015) notion of *ontopower*, the power to bring something into being. Unlike

Foucault's (2009) biopower—that "lets things happen" and manages populations—ontopower *makes things happen*. This is precisely the job of the informant.

The active function of the informant is most clearly illustrated in the sting operation. According to Aaronson and Williams (2019), 36% of all defendants in post-9/11 terrorism-related cases were caught in an informant-led sting operation (see also Greenberg 2017; Norris and Grol-Prokopczyk 2015). This phenomenon has prompted much popular commentary and legal scholarship on entrapment (Field 2019; Norris 2019; Roth 2014; Said 2010; Sherman 2008).[1] Vis-à-vis their targets, the informant is at times: the only connection to a terror group, however imaginary; the primary radicalizing force, encouraging targets to consume extremist propaganda and utter anti-American sentiments; the supplier of (fake or inert) weapons; the one who thinks up a plot; and a provider of financial assistance (for an illustration, watch Heilbroner and Davis 2014). In short, the informant mediates a target's connection to a global threat in a way that brings cells, networks, and plots into being (Szpunar 2018). While many of the aforementioned acts are "indicators" of entrapment (Norris and Grol-Prokopczyk 2015), the informant's work is done in such a way as to conjure signs of his target's predisposition, allowing entrapment claims to be circumvented in US courts (Szpunar 2017).[2] For instance, the informant elicits ideological statements from targets that reinforce claims that the targets would have become terrorists if given the chance by anybody, not just the informant. Such future-oriented and speculative "facts" are then laundered into actionable intelligence through the paradigm of preemption (Hong and Szpunar 2019). Last, the active work of the informant does not end in the field. In both the Cold War and war on terror contexts, informants testify at trials, actively shaping interpretations and filling in gaps in audio and video surveillance (Szpunar 2018). Ultimately, instead of a passive supplier, the informant *is an active medium that shapes both the environment into which they are placed and the information that emerges from it.*

Studying what an informant does is notoriously difficult given the secrecy that shrouds undercover operations. As such, the methods used by reporters and scholars have varied. Aaronson (2013) is one of the few journalists to interview informants (see also Black 2012). Bechrouri (2018) interviews officials involved with agency programs. State archives have been useful in the East German Stasi context (Bruce 2010; Epstein 2004). Trial transcripts also provide insight into the actions, motives, and roles of informants throughout investigations and at trial (Szpunar 2018). Yet, the latter trail is narrowing. Of 144 ISIS-related cases, only ten have gone to a jury trial (Greenberg 2017), largely because a plea deal is more likely to garner a lighter sentence than a trial stained by notion of "terror."

Beyond the field and the courtroom, the informant is also part of surveillance culture in another way. Both throughout the Cold War (Kackman 2005) and in today's "securitainment" (Andrejevic 2011), the informant is a cultural figure, however maligned. For example, television representations of the informant help to reinforce socio-political narratives and identities, from the suburban patriarch (Kackman 2005) to racist war on terror stereotypes (Alsultany 2012; Bayoumi 2015). This paper suggests another site, one that connects the person in the field to the cultural figure: the informant memoir.

The memoir is a genre not easily distinguishable from other life narratives or autobiographical writing (see Fass 2006); nevertheless, several of its characteristics are pertinent here. The memoir is always an argument about identity (Eakin 2004; Smith and Watson 2001) in a way that connects the personal to the collective. On one level, the memoir is the author's attempt to celebrate their deeds, clear up misunderstandings, stake authority, and provide a narrative for posterity's sake (Gusdorf 1980: 36). On another level, the memoir as

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[1] The entrapment defense has never been successfully applied in a US terrorism-related case. In Canada, on the other hand, a British Columbia couple, recovering drug addicts who had been homeless, had their convictions overturned. A judge ruled, "the world has enough terrorists…. We do not need the police to create more out of marginalized people" (qtd. in Austen 2016).

[2] Utilizing the entrapment defense in the US legal system is perilous. Once invoked, it allows prosecutors to present evidence that would otherwise be inadmissible. Namely, evidence of the defendant's predisposition to committing the crimes with which they are charged. On the "subjective" test of entrapment, see Field (2019) and Sherman (2008).

an autobiographical intention "places the self relative to time, history, cultural pattern and change" (Hart 1970: 491) and forefronts the "social details of life" (Fass 2006: 110). As such, it acts as a prosthesis for collective memory (Miller 2002) that shapes contemporary debates and the historical record. Given the controversial nature of the informants' work, their memoirs are certainly written in response to criticism with the intent of celebrating the author and buttressing the constructs and assemblages integral to surveillance cultures. As such, memoirs are also "evidence." But—given that it is a genre not entirely divorced from fiction (Eakin 2004; Fass 2006)—evidence of what? At best, the memoirist's individual recollections should be, like all memory, understood as reconstructions rather than the retrieval of unsullied imprints (Bartlett 1932). These reconstructions are shaped by those very constructs that the memoir celebrates and their attendant scripts and subjectivities (Gusdorf 1980; Smith and Watson 2001). This is most evident in the I's of the memoir. Who the memoirist narrates and from what position they narrate are not the same I. Neither is authentic (Smith and Watson 2001: 53–55). They are entangled with one another and with an "ideological I," a "concept of personhood culturally available to the narrator when he tells his story" (Smith and Watson 2001: 61; Smith 1988: 105). As Michael Kackman (2005: 27) explains, the authority of another Cold War informant, Herbert Philbrick, "relies less on his involvement with the Communist Party than on his intelligibility as a traditionally masculine father and husband." The next section turns to reading two informant memoirs published over half a century apart with a focus on the I's therein—narrated, narrating, and ideological—and how they figure into security cultures organized around a fear of small numbers.

## The I's of Informant Memoirs

Louis F. Budenz's memoir, *This is My Story*, was published in 1947 by Whittlesey House, a trade book imprint of McGraw-Hill. Mubin Shaikh's *Undercover Jihadi* was published by Advances Press, LLC, which is likely owned and operated by Shaikh's co-author, Anne Speckhard. While there is no official declaration of ownership on the press's website, the outlet has published only six books and only one is not authored or co-authored by Speckhard.[3] Unlike Budenz's first-person narrative, *Undercover Jihadi* is written in the third person and Speckhard is listed as the first author (Speckhard and Shaikh 2014). In addition to Shaikh's memory "as told to me" (Speckhard and Shaikh 2014: 271), the book also utilizes court hearings and journalist accounts. Nevertheless, given that the majority of the book is clearly based on Shaikh's personal experiences, and that the "vital statistics" of the author are a signature of "life narratives" (Smith and Watson 2001), the book is indeed a memoir and makes explicit what others leave hidden when using ghostwriters (Cooper 2018).

These two informants are not representative of a general trend. While informants and their cases share certain broad similarities—motives and questionable actions—it is difficult to generalize given how few operations (and their attendant details) are made public. This paper focuses on Budenz and Shaikh because they wrote public accounts of their lives and their work was the subject of significant public debate.

Both memoirs are trade books intended for a public audience. Both men were the subject of public debate. The motives of those who take up such work are indeed varied (Marx 1974: 413) and those of Budenz and Shaikh were well scrutinized. Budenz was alleged to be acting against the CPUSA because he was indebted to it financially. Shaikh was portrayed as an adventure seeker and drug addict who entrapped his targets. While a judge dismissed the latter claim (el Akkad 2009), Shaikh certainly aided their path toward action by helping stage a "training camp." Thus, part of the motivation to write a memoir here lies in pushing back against negative press. To do so, each author emphasizes he was not coaxed into working as an informant; rather, each approached law enforcement and offered his services. Atop these claims, both the work of the informants and the memoirs themselves are presented as a public service. *Undercover Jihadi* (Speckhard and Shaikh 2014: ix) is dedicated to those who work "without the luxury of limelight." Ostensibly, the book provides the public with an example of the "success stories we don't hear about" (a security industry and

[3] My hard copy seems to be a rough printing of the e-book. The "About the Authors" section includes hyperlinks and the book is also missing the last fifteen endnotes.

media platitude). Budenz's (1947) memoir is itself presented as a cautionary tale for well-meaning Americans.

Each author also has more specific audiences in mind. Budenz (1947: vi) dedicates his memoir "To Mary Immaculate, Patroness of Our Beloved Land" and ends the book with a mix of Catholic sermonizing and a rehash of domino theory. This speaks to: his critics, one of whom described the memoir as "an attempt to whitewash the red off the central figure" (Page 1947: 182); the anti-Catholics of the time, however waning their number (see Blanshard 1949; Zeitz 2015); and those who would hire him as a professional witness. Speckhard and Shaikh (2014) target security researchers and practitioners. The book begins with six-and-a-half pages of "Advanced Praise" from a who's who of administrative terrorism research.[4] With their public, academic, and government audiences, these memoirs are a part of, and reflective of, their respective economies of fear.

The intentions of the memoirist are certainly multiple and overlapping. In both memoirs, Hart's (1970: 491) triad of shifting and interacting autobiographical intentions are present: confession (tied to the "truth of the self"), apology (which seeks to establish "the integrity of the self"), and memoir (which situates the self in history and culture). The latter intention—distinct from memoir as a *genre* that contains all three intentions—I take to mean as not only how an author situates their narrative in relation to their perceived duties within their world but also how their narrative is written through/within the dominant security discourse of that time. Each intention does not simply correspond to an I. The narrated, narrating, and ideological I's of each author's account are themselves "multiple, mobile, and mutating" (Smith and Watson 2001: 63). Rather, intentions and I's weave through one another providing a useful way to underscore the discursive work of the texts. The narrated I's are primarily confessional, publicly admitting how one was duped or radicalized; but even this is communicated through ideological I's found in security discourse. In this sense, the intent is also memoir. The narrating I's are primarily memoir, situated within security cultures and their attendant missions as the patriotic Catholic or the good Muslim. These too, of course, are ideological I's. Last, the climax of each memoir is not the finale of a mission—even though both have been described as thrillers (Boyle 1948; Pantucci 2015). Instead, the climax lies in what Hart (1970) calls "apology," an attempt to establish an integrated self. The move away from Communism and jihadism is integral to staking the authority each author needs as a professional witness or talking head. Yet, this is also the key ideological maneuver in the texts vis-à-vis the fear of small numbers in that it positions the authors as exceptions that prove the rule.

## Confession, Authority, Identity Crisis

Today's theories of radicalization posit a broad array of triggers that can lead one to terror. Their attendant models are largely linear, suggesting little chance of disengagement once the process has begun (see King and Taylor 2011; Patel 2011). Discourses of infiltration similarly worried about the Communist exploitation of social grievances—cost of living, labor conditions, racial inequality, and so on—through which ordinary Americans might be lured into Party ranks (Hoover 1958). What ultimately pushes an American or Canadian down one of the many possible paths to subversion or terror? At the core of theories of radicalization today is the idea of an identity crisis, a person's search for meaning when they feel out of place or pulled between conflicting social groups. Former CIA-agent Marc Sageman (2008) asserts that individuals radicalize not because of what they think (politically or otherwise) but because of how they feel. While this language was certainly not used during the Cold War, fears of Americans going Communist followed a similar logic. Hoover (1958: 112) surmised that Americans became Communists because the Party offered them a sense of "belongingness." Americans might also turn—at times unwittingly through front organizations—because of a desire to right the wrongs of society (Hoover 1958: 107). These are precisely the I's narrated by Budenz

[4] Shaikh also spends two pages in his acknowledgments profusely (and awkwardly) thanking this group: "J.M. Berger (quiet, unassuming, and very deadly)… Mia Bloom (super intelligent)… Marc Sageman (a living legend, seriously), Alex Schmid (Jedi Master of radicalization and terrorism studies)" and so on (Speckhard and Shaikh 2014: 274).

and Shaikh. Each *confesses* to being duped or radicalized; significantly, neither was, at least initially, intentionally seeking out the enemy.

One reviewer called Budenz's memoir "a study in the futility of being a democrat, a Catholic, and a Communist at one and the same time" (Abell 1947: 400). Budenz (1947: 204) himself frames his story as a "contest over [his] soul between Marxism and Mary." This contest, however, was spurred by finding himself between Catholicism and American liberalism. For Budenz, atheism and moral bankruptcy arose out of the latter (20). So, while a variety of religious leaders who appeared in front of the House Committee on Un-American Activities asserted that it was their belief in god that inoculated them from the Red Menace (Szpunar 2018), Budenz (1947) presents a different story. It was his Catholic upbringing, he claims, that made him sensitive to the suffering of others—workers, minorities, and so on—a sensitivity that made him appear "queer" to his white schoolmates (18). He became a labor activist to right the wrongs of American capitalism (55).

Budenz joined the Party in 1935 when he thought a shift in the CPUSA position—the People's Front—opened up a place for people of faith within the movement (125). But, over time, "Lenin's writings had done their work" (124) and the once "incipient Marxist" (55) who "regretfully and reluctantly cooperated with Communists because of what they backed" (89) would come to think "exclusively in terms of production" (115). Budenz was "duped" and describes the period of his Party membership "as the lowest ebb in [his] religious life" (115). He accounts for his ten-year stint with the Party through the "mesmerism of unbelief" (204), that is, "the perversity of the human soul… once it has been led into the camp of error through the delusion of being led by reason" (166). His story is, as one critic put it, "the 'Confessions' of St. Augustine in modern dress" (Page 1947: 181).

The first chapter of Shaikh's memoir (Speckhard and Shaikh 2014) is titled, "Growing Up Between Two Identities." It is a position stressed by Jessica Stern, a prominent terrorism expert, in her foreword: Shaikh "lived between two worlds—the socially and religiously conservative world of his immigrant parents and the permissive society of his neighbors and friends" (Speckhard and Shaikh 2014: xiii). His family's "Indo-Pak" (59) approach to life is described in orientalist terms, as an "old world mentality shipped straight in [to Canada] from Southeast Asia" (21). No mention is made of how racism or xenophobia might have added to the tension Shaikh experienced. Instead what is stressed is how his family reacted to his rebellious youth: "What kind of Muslim are you?" (63).

In Shaikh's story, the narrated I experiencing a crisis of identity is mediated through the ideological figure of the "queer" terrorist (Puar and Rai 2002). First, Shaikh communicates his difficulty in squaring the permissiveness of Canadian culture with "his 'other' world where female modesty was the norm" (Speckhard and Shaikh 2014: 20). Second, Shaikh's confesses his experience of sexual abuse at the hands of an uncle and recounts how it was swept under the rug by those close to him in the interest of community and familial decorum (36). What follows is not intended to minimize his experience but to highlight how his confession is coopted into a *scientia sexualis* (Foucault 1978) of radicalization. Indeed, the theme of "sexual humiliation"—as Stern puts it in her foreword (Speckhard and Shaikh 2014: xiv)—has long been mobilized in explanations of radicalization. For instance, John Walker Lindh's transformation into the "American Taliban" was largely explained through a narrative of "failed heterosexuality" (Alsultany 2012). In the later pages of Shaikh's memoir, Speckhard's voice takes over and, building on her previous work, comments for almost seven pages on how women threaten men with humiliation—"holding themselves out as prizes" (Speckhard and Shaikh 2014: 247)—in an effort to radicalize them.

Shaikh resolved his identity crisis by joining Tablighi Jamaat, an organization that proselytizes a non-political variant of Islam in India and Pakistan. It was during his missionary work that he had a two-day run in with the Taliban and was instantly attracted to their hypermasculine brand of jihad. In them he saw "fierce warriors" and was "beside himself with excitement and admiration" (Speckhard and Shaikh 2014: 68–69); what is implied here is that he saw in them a path to redemption after sexual humiliation. He details a growing extremism, confessing that he privately celebrated the collapse of the Twin Towers. When studying

in Syria in the mid-2000s, he almost joined a caravan of young men traveling to Iraq to wage jihad. Instead, he returned to Canada. This was as close as he would come to joining an extremist group.

The narrated I's of each memoir are ideological I's. The duped American was a well-meaning citizen who sought to resolve the tension between his religious duty and the liberal world in which he found himself. The pull of extremism for a Canadian Muslim comes from a tension between an imported and lived culture, the fault placed on the former and its sexual "deviancy." In both, politics are omitted from consideration. Moreover, the burden of guilt in each confession is mitigated by its ideological packaging. The confession is necessary in establishing the author's authority to discuss infiltration or radicalization, but there is a delicate balance here. The experience must be both convincing *and* "distant" enough for readers to trust the author. Enter the narrating I.

## Patriotic Catholics, Good Muslims, Chance Encounters

Both narratives are presented chronologically. But each author, even while in the throes of their confession, foreshadows who the narrated I would become: the narrating I telling the story. Both men scatter inklings that they had misgivings about the enemy camp, even at the peak of their participation or interest. Budenz (1947: 195) stresses his repeated refusal to "go underground" or use an alias, which he was advised to do by the Party. Anything clandestine was "repulsive to [Budenz] as being entirely out of character in free America," even as he acknowledges the effect of the Palmer raids on the Party's membership (86). For his part, Shaikh asserts that, even in the moment he celebrated 9/11, he internally expressed a strong objection to killing innocent civilians. Ultimately, the story of the duped or radicalized is narrated from other positions aligned with Cold War and war on terror discourses.

In contrast to the small number of individuals who are radicalized and take part in jihadist terror in North America (Kurzman 2019) and despite evidence that Muslim-American communities cooperate with law enforcement and actively challenge extremism (Schanzer, Kurzman, and Moosa 2010), Muslim-Americans are subjected to disproportionate scrutiny. This scrutiny ranges from government hearings that portray Muslims as problem populations and peddle in some of the most blatant orientalist stereotypes, like those initiated by Representative Peter King in 2011, to intrusive government surveillance. There is a well-documented pressure for Muslim-Americans to show that they are loyal and "moderate," that is, that they are "good" Muslims, a trope that permeates war on terror discourse and popular representations of it (Alsultany 2012; Bayoumi 2015; Maira 2009; Mamdani 2004). Shaikh went public with his work because of the government's lack of acknowledgement that a member of the Muslim community had been instrumental in the Toronto 18 case (Speckhard and Shaikh 2014: 221). Shaikh wanted the public to know about the "good Muslim" who helped protect the West. Indeed, Shaikh's narrative arch ends with a return to "moderate" Islam. He details the spiritual journey that followed going public and, as a result, being shunned by his community. It is in the throes of a simultaneous drug withdraw and spiritual revelation in a hotel room in Mecca, Saudi Arabia that Shaikh concludes his work was *for* rather than against his religion.

Budenz's case presents an interesting though imperfect parallel. Surely, throughout the Cold War religiosity was one key ideological attribute used to solidify the dichotomy between America and godless Communism, but there is more involved. In the immediate aftermath of WWII, anti-Catholic sentiment was somewhat waning in America (Zeitz 2015) but not completely extinguished. Two years after Budenz wrote his memoir, Paul Blanshard (1949) published a bestseller that accused the Catholic Church of being a threat to American democracy. Moreover, the Red Scare saw a fair share of conspiracies theories attacking the Catholic Church (Powers 2004). Nevertheless, Budenz (1947) extensively quotes the Bible and presents his story as that of the prodigal son, once lost but now found. It was only through the process of reversing his excommunication that—alluding to Jesus curing Saul's blindness— "the final scales had fallen from [his] eyes" (344) and he was able to return to the "rule under the cross" (332). But this rule, he stresses, is not one that divides a Catholic's loyalty between Washington and the Vatican. Instead, he interlaces his renewed Catholicism and his American patriotism, asserting that throughout history the Catholic Church has repeatedly saved Western civilization from threats (353).

Both the narrated I and narrating I are dressed in ideological clothes. Certainly, reproducing these characters of security—the duped, the radicalized, the patriot, the good Muslim—in salient ways connects these texts to their respective economies of fear; these subjectivities are being sold to the public. However, the narrative and ideological climax lies in how the authors communicate the shift from narrated to narrating I, from dupe to patriot, from extremist to good Muslim. Many theories of radicalization are linear (King and Taylor 2011) and problematically lack an offramp for those that may be moving toward violence. While Hoover (1958: 117) rejects the idea of "once a Communist, always a Communist," he repeatedly hints at the difficult of leaving the Party by referring to the Communist "spell." Budenz (1947: 276) echoes this when he describes the "Red strait jacket which turns men of courage into Russian robots." In short, how were these two able to break free? Or, to paraphrase Hart (1970), how is an integrated self communicated across a seemingly impassable divide?

Both men narrate their release from the pull of the enemy as the result of a *chance encounter*. Budenz (1947) recalls in detail a 1937 meeting with Fulton Sheen, a popular Catholic Bishop who preached over the airwaves; Budenz credits Sheen with guiding his return to the Catholic Church. They met to discuss a debate between them that had played out in newspapers. Sometime into the conversation, Sheen changed the subject: "Let us now talk of the Blessed Virgin." Budenz (1947: 162–163) recalls this "electrifying moment" at which he was immediately "conscious of the senselessness and sinfulness of [his] life as [he] then lived it." Budenz is adamant that this encounter gave him a way of out of the "mental concentration camp in America known as the Communist Party" (233)—a powerful metaphor in post-WWII America. Only then was he able to look "upon Communist antics in the *third person*" (230, my emphasis) and examine "the Communist position and the Communist methods of treachery and deceit fully and critically" (315). Mubin Shaikh's similarly credits a religious scholar with his redemption. Shaikh met a man named Shaykh al-Bahar by chance in Syria and they spent many hours combing through religious texts together. Shaikh credits al-Bahar with teaching him how to understand religion in more nuanced, non-extremist ways (Speckhard and Shaikh 2014: 101). The experience of either Budenz or Shaikh is not available to everyone. In Budenz's case, one well-known labor activist turned Communist is contacted by a similarly well-known public figure. The rarity of such an encounter is communicated in Shaikh's narrative by reducing al-Bahar to a trace. Despite ostensibly using all available accounts to reconstruct Shaikh's experience (Speckhard and Shaikh 2014: 271), no information is given about al-Bahar independent of his brief relationship with Shaikh. He remains an elusive shadow who disappears as quickly as he had emerged.

While the inroads to the enemy camp are presented as potentially infinite, encounters with people like those who helped the informants along their own redemptive path are exceptionally rare. In effect, the small number representing the enemy hiding in the crowd—the number "1"—is dwarfed in significance to the number representing what might free the duped or radicalized from the grasp of the enemy. This transformation is effectively communicated as a matter of chance, a slim and perhaps incalculable probability, but one that is by definition less than one (< 1).

## Less Than One: Fear of Small Numbers

The fear of small numbers is centered on the number "1" (Appadurai 2006). It is the fear of not knowing where or in whom one's enemy might materialize. This thinking is central to justifications of both mass surveillance and the continued use of informants. The analysis of informant accounts of their work and lives digs deeper into this logic and its place in a broader economy of fear. The careful balance between the confession of the duped or radicalized narrated I within the memoir of the narrating patriotic Catholic or good Muslim certainly works to help Budenz and Shaikh assert their authority to speak on existential threats. At the same time, the memoirs reproduce, however modestly, subjectivities central to security discourse. The ideological climax, however, is in the impossible arithmetic of their stories. Getting in is easy. Getting out is the exception. The transition between the two is the crux of the informant memoir, across its intents and audiences. As an exceptional and improbable story—incalculable but by definition less than one—the informant memoir does not work to reassure the reader of the potential to escape the enemy camp without

the intervention of authorities. Rather, it feeds into a culture of fear that posits the informant as an indispensable medium of surveillance, one whose actions are necessary regardless of the cost.

In this light, Shaikh's work with CSIS reveals a sad irony. The memoir's account of the Toronto 18 parallels Shaikh's own story. Ostensibly, both illustrate the multiple pathways to radicalization. For the younger recruits, "moving from gangster to jihadi rap was not much of a leap as both involve distrust and disdain for state authority and a call to violence" (Speckhard and Shaikh 2014: 145); this is a shift that echoes Shaikh's own attraction to hypermasculinity. Yet, when Shaikh got involved, he did not find men that "fit the stereotype of the hardcore super trained terrorist" (167) that he had seen on television and in film. Instead, the "training camp" he set up was a comedy of errors. Unprepared and bumbling men (and boys) travelled into the Ontario wilderness in the dead of winter with pop-up tents and light sleeping bags (166–178). This is certainly a more apt stereotype of those caught up in sting operations (see Shipler 2012). But rather than being their chance encounter, their al-Bahar, Shaikh fulfilled his securitizing function and "made things happen."

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